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Addison Ballard





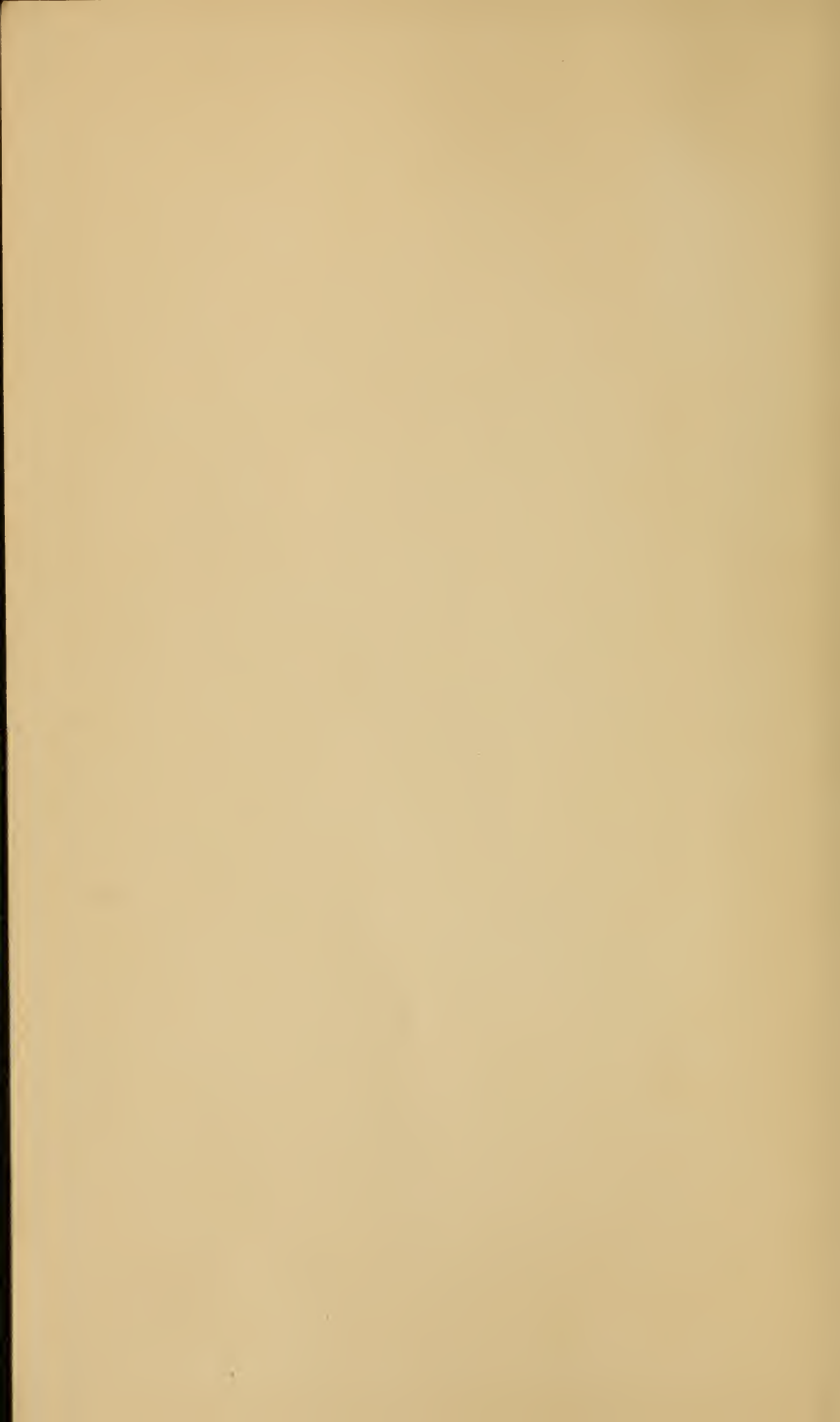
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**FROM TEXT TO TALK**



# FROM TEXT TO TALK

## BY ADDISON BALLARD, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "FROM TALK TO TEXT," "THROUGH THE SIEVE,"

"ARROWS; OR, TEACHING A FINE ART."



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As He **Talked** with us by the way; as  
He opened to us the **Scriptures**.

*Luke 24 : 32.*





This book is designed as a companion volume to the author's "From Talk to Text." It is taken in part from the author's "Through the Sieve," now wholly and permanently out of print.



## MOTTO AND MOTIVE

It is a danger of serious import that we believe we are advanced toward perfection in proportion to our knowledge of the way.

FENELON

What we most need in our religion is, not to be informed, but reminded.

HANNAH MORE

Not the advancing, therefore, of anything "new" to be believed, but the urging of old and acknowledged duties to be done.

THE AUTHOR



# CONTENTS

## I.

	PAGE
I. COMMON SENSE, FAITH AND IGNORANCE .....	1
II. A SURE GUIDE AND GOAL ....	4
III. NEIGHBORLINESS NEXT TO GODLINESS .....	8
IV. FULLEST ACCORD IN WARFARE AND WORSHIP .....	13
V. CHRISTIANITY, A RELIGION OF FACTS .....	16
VI. LIKEWISE .....	20
VII. CONTRARIWISE .....	25
VIII. AN ORIGINAL GUEST—THE LOWER ENNOBLED BY THE HIGHER .....	31
IX. OUR ONE CONCERN .....	36
X. SELF-HARMING HASTE .....	43
XI. THE WEIGHING OF A KING ...	49
XII. UNUSED SPICES .....	54
XIII. REINTRODUCTIONS .....	57
XIV. THE JOY OF IMMEDIATE SUR- RENDER .....	60
XV. THE SILENT LIFE .....	63

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
XVI. THE CROSS, A SYMBOL OF OBE-	
DIENCE .....	67
XVII. BEYOND PERADVENTURE ....	70
XVIII. NO COMPROMISE WITH TYR-	
ANNY .....	73
XIX. PAUL'S QUARREL WITH PETER	78
XX. THE MULTITUDE OF THE	
SAVED .....	83
XXI. A QUICK TURN FROM SORROW	
TO JOY .....	86
XXII. SATAN'S FALL FORESEEN ....	91
XXIII. PERFECT AT LAST .....	93
XXIV. LOVE'S "FINALLY" .....	96

## II

XXV. THE EARLY MORNING OUTFIT	
OF PRAYER .....	101
XXVI. GIFTS FOR GAIN .....	105
XXVII. GOOD CHEER FOR DARKEST	
HOURS .....	108
XXVIII. THE BROKEN HEART .....	116
XXIX. TENACITY OF CHRISTIAN PUR-	
POSE .....	127
XXX. GIVING CONSCIENCE THE BEN-	
EFIT OF THE DOUBT .....	131
XXXI. NUMBERING OUR DAYS .....	136

# CONTENTS

PAGE

XXXII. SYSTEM AND SENTIMENT IN GIVING .....	141
XXXIII. THE GREATER OF TWO GREAT VICTORIES .....	144
XXXIV. GRATIFICATION AND GRATITUDE	148
XXXV. INTERCESSION FOR THE ILL DESERVING .....	152
XXXVI. SLANDER—ITS METHODS, MO- TIVES AND RESULTS .....	154
XXXVII. THE FOOLISH FORMALIST ....	160
XXXVIII. TWO KINDS OF RELIGION, AND THE BETTER OF THE TWO .	165
XXXIX. HEART-RECEPTION OF JESUS .	174
XL. AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER .....	189
XLI. FAITH'S TRANQUILITY .....	193
XLII. FORWARD .....	197
XLIII. FREE TO GO BACK, BUT LIKING BETTER TO GO ON .....	203









## I

### COMMON SENSE, FAITH AND IGNORANCE

*So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day; and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. Mark 4: 26, 27.*

The acting out of true religion, as we find it unfolded in one of our Lord's parables, is made up in about equal parts of Common-Sense, Faith and Ignorance. The husbandman "casts seed into the ground." That is his common-sense. This done, he "sleeps and rises night and day," in full confidence that the seed will "spring and grow up." That is his faith. But, it is added, he "knoweth not how." That is his ignorance.

For the doer of the things that most need to be done, this "how" is a question which may either be ignored or the consideration of which may be indefinitely postponed. Be she the veriest "fool" as to the chemistry of combustion, the housemaid "errs" not in the boiling of her tea-kettle. Be the husbandman ever so unversed in the philosophy of plant-growth, he is yet at no loss as to the plowing of his field or the sowing of his seed. He is not that other "fool" he would surely be were he either to decline or delay his farm-work unless he first have fully explained to him the scientific secret of seed-sprouting, stalk-shooting

and ear-filling. Prompt to do his stint, he trusts with no distraction of doubt that his silent and unseen Co-Worker will do His own full share of their joint undertaking; that He will see to it that soil and sun and shower and season do each its appointed task. Caring less for causes than for results, so the outcome be sure, he will not stumble at the mystery of the cause. Accepting the established facts of farming experience, he goes cheerily through the whole round of summer toil, not puzzling himself about those hidden links which join his own work with the greater work of God.

As is the domain of earth, so, also, is the Kingdom of Heaven. The husbandman knows well what his farm duties are. We know just as well what our Christian duties are. We know what it is, first of all, to treat one another in a Christian way; to do to others and to all others as we would have them do to us; what it is to put envy away from us and to rejoice in the gifts, acquirements and successes of others as we would have them rejoice in our own; what it is to lend a helping heart to those in sorrow and a helping hand to those in need. We know what it is to love, pray for and forgive our enemies. Equally well do we know that besides these duties toward our fellow-men, we are to seek for a nearer acquaintance with God by diligent study of His Word and by prayer. We know that we are to pray in our closets and that we are to use all social and public helps of Christ's appointment.

All these are just as plain duties of the Christian as were those in the parable of the husbandman. Are we practising these duties? We cannot but be growing Christians if we are. And these duties any Christian may do and be wholly ignorant of technical theology. No man who wishes to come to Christ need lose a moment's sleep because he cannot understand the new birth or reconcile foreordination with free-will. We may have the full and blessed benefit of prayer and know nothing of its philosophy. We may plant and water and gather precious fruit in the Lord's vineyard, yet know not how it is that God quickens the seed and gives the increase. Enough for us that He does bless our labor for Him and for souls; enough that He does bless to us the Word and prayer and the sacraments and fellowship of His church. We may not see it from day to day, but if we are doing our part faithfully we may rest in assured confidence that God is doing His, and that we are, therefore, both growing to the stature of perfect men in Christ and gathering fruit unto life eternal.

## II

### A SURE GUIDE AND GOAL

*Looking unto Jesus, the captain and perfecter of our faith. Heb. 12:1.*

When the Arctic explorer, Nansen, announced to the crew of the *Fram* his determination to quit the ship for good and all and push his way northward alone over the ice-fields, Petersen begged that he might accompany his captain on the journey.

"It will be no child's play," said Nansen. "The journey will be one not only of severe hardship, but of great danger."

"I would not think," replied Petersen, "of taking it alone, but with you along, I know it will be all right."

The world's best framed code of morals leaves us stranded on the way to our strenuously sought goal of a perfect life as discouragingly as the *Fram* halted Nansen on his way to the Pole. In this crisis of our need, Jesus appears and encourages our quest with the assurance that, if we but follow in His steps, He will make our seeking a success.

But first He would have us consider well what following in His steps means—the living by us of the same self-denying, cross-bearing life that He Himself lived here on the earth—a life of equal love to our neighbor and of supreme love

to God; the doing to others, in all our social and business relations, as we would have them do to us; the refusing to put fame, power, wealth or selfish ease or advantage before love; the suffering of loss, if need be, in the maintaining of this high standard; meekness under wrongs done to us; forgiveness for the wrong done, and for the evil a return only of good; obedience to whatever it be God's will that we should either do or suffer.

To live such a life as this in such a world as this Jesus would at the outset have us understand is no "child's play." On the contrary, that it means hardness to be endured, dangerously misleading by-paths to be shunned, rising inclinations to turn aside or turn back to be steadfastly resisted; a fight against disloyal doubt to be fought in right soldierly fashion, and fought to a triumphant finish.

In a crowd the little child holds tight to its father's hand. In the heart of a forest the traveller fears losing sight of his guide. Like the child and the traveller we are all beset by dangers, to defend us from which we need a higher wisdom than our own. For those who believe in either one Supreme Being or many superior beings, it is the greatest of comforts to know that He or they are both ever near them and ever able and willing to defend them from all that is evil and bring them to all that is good.

It is in this natural and universal feeling that idolatry, or sight-worship, has its root and, to a

certain extent, its justification. If I can see the God I worship, then I know that He sees me; that He takes note of my homage, beholds my offerings and hears my prayers. Better, a thousand times better, the devout idolater than the no-God atheist or the know-nothing-of-God agnostic. For idol-worship is still worship; a humble acknowledgment of dependence on divine wisdom and strength. As much better than atheism or agnosticism as a living tree, however disfigured by unsightly excrescences, is better than a dead tree, however tall and shapely; better as crudest petroleum, which may yet be refined to brilliancy, is better than deadly gas, however scientifically prepared, which extinguishes any light over which it is poured. Be it that idol-worship is but a pitiful mockery of the soul's deepest need, it is still a constant reminder of that unsatisfied need. Such a point of union is thus established between polytheism and Christianity as easily accounts for the welcome which the honestly inquiring idol-worshipper has gladly given to those new and trustworthy answers of Revelation which give true scope and direction to the hitherto blind impulses and aspirations of his religious nature.

What the hardships and perils of that Arctic expedition from the Fram would prove to be, Nansen himself could no more tell than could his would-be follower. It would be an equal risk for them both.

In Jesus we have an experienced as well as a



faithful guide. He knows the way; is Himself the way. He knows our need; just what strength for whatever weakness, what support under whatever burden of care, what succor for whatever kind of temptation, what comfort for whatever sorrow, what courage for whatever disheartening fear. More than guide, He is also a companion; eating with us the bread of whatever trial, tasting with us the cup of whatever affliction. He not only feels for us; He feels with us. Hence the calm and fearless trust with which we go on to meet whatever the future may have in store for us, in assured confidence that we shall be welcomed, at last, to the joy, in heaven, of our faithfully followed Leader and Guide.

### III

#### NEIGHBORLINESS, NEXT TO GODLINESS

*First, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Matt. 5: 23, 24.*

Wholly taken up with the decent semblance of religion, formalism ignores morality. Fancying that God is pleased with the shows of outward worship, the over-devout formalist feels himself at liberty to treat his fellow-men with a rudeness or injustice which upright, though perhaps prayerless persons would scorn to commit. Hence that unseemly yoking together of strenuous piety with sickening depravity which our Lord so aptly describes as "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel."

The men thus satirized by Christ were a set of religionists who maintained that a man might keep the first table of the law so punctiliously that he need not keep the second table at all; might serve God so devoutly that he could without blame hate men as cordially as he pleased; who imagined that they could so hoodwink God by bribes and flattery that He would care little whether or how much they abused their neighbors. Making the law of no effect through their traditional glosses and false interpretations, where their lives did not fit God's pattern they changed

the pattern to fit their lives—strangling the law under show of embracing it.

In strongest opposition to these Pharisaic notions the Bible everywhere puts morality before what is generally termed piety; doing right before praying; duty to our fellow-men before direct duties to God. Even in the Old Testament God made it to be clearly understood that He cares nothing for religious forms in themselves. "I have," He says, "forms and offerings enough of my own, if that were what I wanted. The beasts of the forest are mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. If I were hungry I would not tell thee. . . Offer unto the Lord the sacrifices of righteousness." "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." "Make all right with your fellow-men, and after that I will make all right with you."

In the New Testament the teaching is the same; only if possible more full and emphatic. It was by such preaching that John prepared the people to receive Christ. When told of Christ's coming and how important it was that they should be ready to receive Him, the people "asked Him saying, What shall we do then?"

"He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise."

"Then came also publicans to be baptized and said to Him, Master, what shall we do?"

"Exact no more than that which is appointed you."

"And the soldiers likewise demanded of Him, saying, And what shall we do?"

"Do violence to no man, neither accuse any."

Thus was a pure and honorable morality the trumpet by which the coming of Jesus was heralded to the world.

Our Lord taught nothing more pointedly than that unneighborly acts are a complete bar to acceptable worship.

"First, be reconciled to thy brother." You have come bringing a gift to the altar of worship; to render praise, offer thanksgiving, seek forgiveness for your sins, drop money into the Lord's treasury. Before bending your knees in adoration, singing your hymn or making your contribution, you think of some unrighted wrong done to a neighbor—unpaid debt, unfair bargain, rude discourtesy, tale-bearing, kindness repaid by neglect, pretext of injury received when you were yourself the injurer. What Jesus would have the very first sight of His altar do for you, the intended worshipper, is to quicken remembrance of wrongs which it has hitherto been convenient for you to forget. What would He have you do? Go on with your worship? No; "Leave there thy gift before the altar." Leave it *before* the altar, but do not put it on the altar. It is a defiled gift, and will not be accepted. Let the prayer go unsaid, the psalm go unsung, the money stay awhile in thy purse. You have come to make your acknowledgments to God; but there are other ac-

knowledgments which are more important just now, and which He says you must make first or He will not accept those made to Himself. "First, be reconciled to thy brother." God wants the first table of the law kept, but not at the expense of the second. He would not suffer broken tables to be put into His ark nor to be brought into His sanctuary. Whole tables must be brought in or none. What is technically called "religion"; prayer, thanksgiving, confession, are good; but they are not good, they are worse than useless if disjoined from a high-toned, right-minded, honorable treatment of our fellow-men. Unless wrong done to our neighbor be righted, devotion of whatever kind is of absolutely no account whatever in the sight of God. That wronged brother is also a child of God; and would you as a father smile on the man who has done some grievous wrong to your child and who leaves the wrong unacknowledged? What would that be but to wink at the indignity and outrage?

It may be that some who are not Christians are saying to themselves, "That is what I like; that is a comfort to me." I am glad if you like it and glad if it is a comfort to you; although I did not say it for that, but because it is true. It is a comfort to any man that he is not mean, selfish, or underhanded in his treatment of his fellows. It is a comfort to be tenderly, honestly, nobly mindful of the rights, good name, prosperity, and happiness of one's neighbors. And there are

men out of the church as well as in the church who have this stamp of nobility and honor.

We say to such men, You are on the right road; but you have by no means completed your journey. You need to be devout towards God as well as upright towards men.

To the offender against morality Jesus does indeed say, "Put not thy gift on the altar." He does *not* say, "Take away from the altar thy gift." "Leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way. First, be reconciled to thy brother"; but there is a second; "Then come and offer thy gift."

This explains in what sense morality is more important than piety. Here is an old stubble field, and I would sow it to wheat. Which is more important to be done first, sowing or plowing? Plowing, certainly, since without that the sowing would be labor lost. But I do not stop with the plowing. So Jesus says we must not stop with the strictest morality. If everything is right in the home, in the office, shop and store, in society, then I may go to Christ about my personal relations with Him. From the altar thus revisited I shall bear away the inward consolation of an accepted gift.

#### IV

### FULLEST ACCORD IN WARFARE AND WORSHIP

*The people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. Josh. 6:20.*

*And they were all with one accord, in one place. Acts 2:1.*

In order to win the happiest success in Christian work, there must be both unity of action and freedom of action. After the walls of Jericho had fallen "the people went up into the city every man straight before him, and they took the city." They went up as one body. None stayed behind, none straggled, none shirked. Every man was in his place in the ranks—priest, officer and private; each in his own place. It was not by a select and privileged few that the victory was won. The army moved with one purpose, as though it were one man animated by one spirit. Yet along with this oneness of purpose and spirit, there was complete personal liberty. All went up together, but every man went up "straight before him"; every man in his own path. Every man had both foot-room and elbow-room. The man was not sunk in the mass. Each soldier fought after his own fashion, and on his own individual responsibility—no crowding, no interference, no damaging criticism; no saying of one to another, "You



must grind your spear exactly as I grind mine and wield it exactly as I wield my own."

And shall one follower of Christ now say to another, "Come under my form of church-government; fall in with my manner of worship and my mode of administering the ordinances, or I cannot recognize you as a fellow-disciple of the Master"? As fitly might the English at Sevastopol have said to their French allies, "We would like your help in the taking of this fortress, but we cannot allow you to have any hand in the business; at least, we cannot give you any recognized place in the lines of investment and battle, unless you will consent to exchange your French gray for our English scarlet; unless you alter your Chassepot rifles into our Enfields; unless on your banners you emblazon our lion and unicorn over your *fleur-de-lis*."

Unhindered by overawing or needless restrictions, sacrificing cheerfully so much of what is peculiar to himself in opinion and practice as the best good of all may require, each hardness-enduring soldier of Christ will wish to go up and help fight his Lord's battles. But because he loves his brethren, also, he will wish for them what he desires for himself, that each of them be allowed to go up "straight before him," do his own share of the work, and win and receive his own due share of the reward.

And as in warfare, so in worship. Going to service one Sunday morning, I was seized with a



pleasurable surprise as all of a sudden the city bells rang out with the accord of their joyous tones. Subdued and blended by the intervening hillside, some notes as of a familiar church-tune came to my ear. Is it the "Reformed" or "Trinity," I at once asked myself, that has so quietly during the past week put a new chime into its old bell-tower? Listening more intently, however, I soon distinguished the sounds of the individual bells of the different churches. My next thought was, What, after all, if the bells of adjacent churches were really tuned in groups and rung as a chime? Some by preconcerted arrangement pealing forth notes for the line, "How pleased and blest was I"; others taking up the refrain, "To hear the people cry"; and others following with, "Come, let us seek our God to-day." Such a united call from all the churches, what a delightful sense would it give of the oneness of all Christians in worship if not in creed!

## V

### CHRISTIANITY, A RELIGION OF FACTS

*And ye are my witnesses of these things.* Luke 24: 48.

*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.* Acts 2: 32.

Christianity has for its key-phrase, "And it came to pass." It is distinguished from false religions in that it is essentially a record of events. It is this advantage which it has of certified narration over uncertain speculation that gives it a reach which is infinitely above all that to which even the most profound philosophy has ever attained. Who of all the "wise and prudent" thinkers of all the ages is more wise and prudent than is Plato? Yet Plato has no story to tell us. It is the Athenian cult. What "all the Athenians" want, what "all the strangers" who have caught from them the spirit of mental collision and combat want, is not finalities, but new and yet newer things about which there can be no end of discussion—a competitive field for logical and metaphysical gymnastics. So long as St. Paul has anything to offer about which they can dispute with him, it is all right. They will not only argue with him to the "end of the chapter," but they will then be just as eager to begin a new chapter of disputation. The history of philosophy, indeed, has no *last* chapter, ending with maledictions

against any man who shall either add to, or take from, the words that have been already spoken.

St. Paul does indeed have something new to say to these ever-inquisitive Athenians by way of argument, but what is vastly more to the purpose, he has news to tell them. He is not, from choice, a disputant. He is, chief of all, a reporter of up-to-date transactions. They listen not only patiently, but interestedly, to the new argument about "the unknown god"; but no sooner does he go on to clinch his argument with the news of Christ's resurrection, than they call him down, and, with their hootings and cat-calls, compel him to stop.

It is the historically established fact of the resurrection that makes it so well worth while to know all else that can be known about the words and works of Jesus. But for His resurrection all else would be but little more than a matter of interesting but merely human biography. His having been both "raised up" and "taken up" gives a life-and-death significance to His whole mission upon earth.

Essentially, then, Christian preachers are always and everywhere to be evangelists—to preach as the Evangelists wrote—not inferences, experiences, systems or dogmas, but—facts. It is the "*Gospel*—the Good News—according to Matthew"—not according to the catechism or the creed. "Ye are my witnesses," says Jesus; and the business of a witness is to tell not what he,

the witness, feels or infers from the facts, but the facts. Tell the facts. Tell them over and over again. Keep on telling them. Then let the facts speak for themselves. Let them make their own appeal to the minds, consciences and hearts of those who hear them. "It is the facts," says Paul to his Corinthian brethren, "in which you stand. It is the facts by which you are saved. It is the facts that you are to hold fast—the facts which I delivered to you, first of all, and which you also received—how that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised again the third day; that, as an indisputable proof of this, He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, of five hundred brethren at once; that He was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and, last of all, of me also."

Some are, no doubt, at a loss to know just how to take St. Paul when he says that he rejoices and will continue to rejoice in even make-belief preachers of Christ; who have only a feigned interest in what they preach. What has now been said makes it easy of interpretation. If there be a fact which it is all-important for the world to know, let any one tell it who will. The Tories of the American Revolution did not much like the way the war had ended. Yet, if they pretended to like it, and started out to spread abroad the good news of the peace that had been made with the mother country, even the most loyal of patriots would have bid them Godspeed. "Tell it to

all the inhabitants of the land." It is what they want; what they need; what they are waiting to hear.

"Go into all the world," is the great commission, "and tell to every creature in it the 'good news' of Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who, having been delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification."

## VI

### (1)

#### LIKEWISE

*And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them, likewise. Luke 6: 31.*

Five hundred years before Christ, the great heathen moralist of a great heathen nation gave this as a complete guide for our treatment of others: "Never do to another what you would not like done to yourself."

This does not tell us to do anything; it only tells us what not to do.

The hermit keeps this rule to perfection. He has no "others" about him to be either hurt by, or to hurt. Instead of vexing himself with the thousand and one troublesome problems of social, business or religious intercourse, he thinks it wiser to run away from them all. No neighborhood squabbles for him, no peace-conferences, no labor-disputes, no political or church controversies, no home or foreign missionary appeals, no contribution-box for any cause to be passed to him. Such commands as "To do good and communicate, forget not"; "Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep"; "Look not every man on his own things, but every man, *also*, on the things of others"—such precepts as

these have no practical meaning for him—a negative way of keeping to a negative rule.

Are even Christian churches and ministers in danger of taking this narrow, eremite view of all that is outside their own denominational interests; of keeping as aloof as possible from those bearing other names than their own?

In his annual Thanksgiving sermon a minister once gave as one cause for thanksgiving, that he and his people had, the past year, gotten along so pleasantly with the minister and people of another large, near-by, wealthy and influential congregation. Then he gave as the reason for it that they had had during the year so little to do with one another! Two near-by, yet hermit congregations. That is one way—husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, families, neighbors, churches, towns and countries, having as little to do with one another as possible—hermit families, hermit churches, hermit neighborhoods and hermit nations.

Yet even Confucius did not advocate seclusion. To one who expressed the wish that he might be a recluse, Confucius said, "We cannot withdraw from the world and associate with birds and beasts that have no affinity with us. With whom should we associate but with suffering men? The disorder that prevails is just that which requires our efforts. If right principles prevailed in the world, there would be no necessity for us to change its state."



To shirk duty because it is hard is to play the coward. To do it is to act the man. We may avoid possible unpleasantness by living apart, but what we want to know is how we may live together and live in right human fashion, too.

The world's rule for our treatment of others is summed up in the one word "retaliation"—taking the word in its exact, literal meaning, "the like again"—good for good, bad for bad. The world regards it good legal tender if you pay a man back in the same coin that he has paid out to you—be the coin what it may. Most men, I think, answer their consciences fairly well if they give back either as good or as bad as has been given to them. "Whatsoever things men do to you, do ye to them likewise" is the way Christ's currency is alloyed in the world's mint. True, even our Lord would say that this is right, provided it is only kindness that is done to you. Do good to them that do good to you, certainly. Never lived another man so susceptible to kindness as Jesus was. Never did He forget the least kindness done to Him, and what is more, He said that He never would forget it; that He would not let even a cup of water, given to one of His disciples in His name, go without its reward. Instead of doing more than others, that professed disciple of Jesus would do less than others—less even than the heathen—were he not to respond thankfully to any act, however small, of good will done to him. It was a heathen who had the sense to say, "You



have said everything bad of a man when you have called him ungrateful."

A mere world-adviser says to a young man or woman just starting out in life, "Would you succeed in either society, politics or business, you must, first of all, make a careful study of human nature. You must understand men so as to know how to take them; that is, how to use them for your own advantage; but, of course, without letting them *see* that they are being used in that way."

Christ's teaching is immeasurably above that. He, too, tells us that we must study human nature. But He tells us *where* we are to study it, and for what purpose. The world's man studies human nature in other men to find what use he can make of them for building up himself. Christ's man studies human nature in his *own* heart; studies to know what kind of treatment he himself would like in order that he may know what kind of treatment to give to others. "What shall I do for my neighbor in any particular case?" will be answered in a Christian way only when I have asked and answered this other question, "What would I, in like circumstances, wish to have him do to or for myself?" When each and every man shall study human nature, first of all, in himself, with the earnest purpose to find in himself a guide for his treatment of others, the millennium will have dawned on the world. It is the Golden Rule of Christ, not alloyed by over-

weening selfishness, but 24 carats fine in practice that is to usher in the Golden Age.

In a perfect society where there are only the pure, good, loving and true, the word "likewise" is all that is needed. Retaliation—the like again—is the law and the practice of all holy beings. It is in accordance with this law of holy retaliation that the education of heaven goes on, and that its joy is heightened and perfected. The worship of heaven is not individual worship alone; it is also a worship of immediate and loving responses. Cherubim and seraphim not only cry, but they cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts."

## VII

### (2)

#### CONTRARIWISE

*Not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise, blessing.* 1 Pet. 3:9.

But in this sin-troubled world of ours is a different kind of experiences, calling for the application of a far nobler requirement, for the exercise of a far loftier spirit. A man attacks, defames, vilifies, wrongs me in any way. Now what am I, as a Christian, to do? Not likewise, but contrariwise; "not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing." Here, retaliation—the like again—would be wholly *unchristian*. Here is a case where the superiority of Christ's man over the world's man is to appear, where is to be shown the advantage which the new nature has over the old and corrupt nature. We are not to bear such injuries in even equivocal silence; we are to go further than silence; we are to render positive good for real evil—to answer rudeness by courtesy, haughtiness by humility, reserve by openness, greed by generosity, cursing by blessing; anything low, base and wrong by its exact opposite.

Christianity has this for its grand distinction that it begins where the best *unchristianized* disposition leaves off. Just where the world's man

stops and beats a hasty retreat, Christ's man takes up his ownward and glorious march. "You have heard that it was said to them of old time, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever smites you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak, also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain." The old Adam goes not a step further than he is compelled to go. The moment he is let go, he hastens back with all speed, nursing his wrath and waiting with the untiring patience of revenge for the time when he can compel his tormentor to go a troublesome mile with himself. The new Adam stops not at the end of the first mile, but offers of his own accord to go another.

Does Jesus here deny the right of proper self-defence? If assailed in my property, reputation or life, may I not defend myself? Yes, provided I do it in such a way as to show, beyond a doubt, that the abuse has aroused in me no feeling of malevolent revenge; that I have no wish to harm my assailant as he has to harm me. We may comprehend perfectly the extent of the wrong done to us, we may protest against it, we may rebuke it, but this out of no rancorous resentment against the wrong-doer. We are to pray for those who despitefully use us, that God may give them

a better mind. "If thy brother has trespassed against thee, have him arrested, at once? No, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." It is not to vent feelings of anger; not to rebuke and shame the transgressor, but to *gain* him for a brother.

As a special incentive to this duty of returning good for evil, we have the promise of a special blessing. Our Christian profession on this point will pretty surely, some time or another, perhaps often, be put to the test. Offences will come so that we will have the chance to pray for those that spitefully use us and persecute us. When that trial comes, we are to remember that it is sent for a divine and good purpose. It is Christ coming to test the genuineness of His own graces in us; and this is a fact we are expected to know beforehand so as not to be taken by surprise: "But contrarywise blessing, knowing that you are thereunto called that you may inherit a blessing." Shall we by carnal recreancy lose the crown which at such a moment Jesus is ready to place upon our brows? Shall we, at the very time of all, when that in our Christian profession is appealed to which, perhaps more than anything else, is its distinctive badge and its crowning glory, shall we then basely falsify and dishonor it? Shall we with an inconsiderate and fatal ease profess Christianity as a whole, but when the trying times come, take it all back, piece by piece?

The success likely to attend the following of this contrariwise precept of Jesus is another encouragement to its observance. It is by rendering good for evil that the evil is overcome. Evil cannot be killed by direct attack any more than Hercules could kill the hundred-headed hydra by simply cutting off its heads. As soon as he had cut off one head, another started up in its place. Hatred has a like pertinacity of life which mere power, however sharply, skillfully and persistently exercised, can never subdue. By threats of vengeance it may be cowed for a time, but cannot be overcome. It can be overcome only by appealing to an opposite feeling. When the envier or hater brandishes his hateful sword, leave him to beat the air alone, while you quietly, by some act or word of unmistakable good-will, stir up whatever there may be in him of ingenuous shame. Get the man's own better disposition to fight against the worse. "Wherefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for by so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head." It was Hercules' fire that did the work, and the hydra of enmity is killed not by vengeful decapitation, but by the caustic of forbearance, forgiveness and love. You heap coals of kindness on your enemy's head, not to give him pain, not as a refined and exquisite mode of revenge, but to burn away his ill will.

In deliberative assemblies there are always



honest differences of opinion—on questions not, it may be, where any moral principle is concerned, but on questions of mere expediency. One man says aggressively and defiantly, "I have taken my ground and I shall listen to nothing else." The tendency of this is to make others just as headstrong and unyielding, and so you have a deadlock and nothing moves. Now let another man say, "I believe that I am right, too. I am fully convinced that my way is the best way. But I am not going to insist on its adoption against the judgment of a majority of my associates. For the sake of harmony and efficiency I am willing to make sacrifices." Obstinacy is at once shamed by the exhibition of such a spirit. Mutual concession, mutual forbearance; each esteeming other better than himself; in honor preferring one another—such is the spirit and the law of Christ.

But it is in the home that most frequent occasions arise for the conflict of opposite views and feelings; most frequent occasions, therefore, for the exercise of contrarywise forbearance. Under some provocation hard words are let slip. This provokes a retort in the same spirit. If the retort be made, it provokes the first offender still more, and so it goes on until the spark becomes a blaze. How shall that be avoided? Either by not replying to the harsh and hasty utterance—keeping "not a sullen but a serene silence"—or by the soft answer which turns away wrath. A

spark or a burning coal left to itself soon goes out. It takes two to make a quarrel as well as two to make a bargain.

It were much had Jesus only given us His beautiful, God-like precepts. But He has given us more. One may give me directions, orally or in writing, how I may go safely over a difficult and dangerous ground. But it were my best guide could I see before me the steps of one who had gone over it before; so much easier is it to follow steps than it is to follow directions. Jesus has given us an example that we should "follow His steps." When He was reviled He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not. Spitting, buffeting, mocking He bore meekly and silently. He dealt no answering blow, He returned no contemptuous or angry look, He uttered no counter-threat. For the scourge, the cross, the spikes and the spear, for wagging heads and cruel taunts He had only pity, forgiveness and prayer.

And it was in just this way that Jesus overcame the evil and that He is still overcoming it. So does He not keep back, but slay the enmity. Like Him let us also overcome. If others do us good, let us respond lovingly and do good to them "likewise." But if any do us evil, let us be ready, "contrariwise," with a blessing.



## VIII

### AN ORIGINAL GUEST—THE LOWER ENNOBLED BY THE HIGHER

*Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast. John 2:8.*

No matter how elaborate or abundant such an entertainment as that of the marriage-feast in Cana of Galilee might be in other particulars; in one particular there must be no failure—the wine must not give out. But it begins to be apparent at a certain stage of this banquet that it is likely to break down in that, as it was then regarded, most important part. An ill-natured guest would have said unkind things about the slenderness of the provision. Deeply concerned for the reputation of the bridegroom and his friends, Mary applies to Jesus to help them out of their difficulty. He kindly supplies what is lacking. He not only by His presence approves and encourages the enjoyment of the occasion, but he takes up the feast when it is likely to fail and makes it a success. He rescues the banquet from the reproach which would otherwise have been sure to follow, and makes it honorable. He saves the feast from a mortifying decline and prolongs it in undiminished credit and enjoyment to the end.

In its “beginning” the world’s entertainment promises well. “Every man at the beginning sets

forth that which is good." Everything is bright and sparkling to the young. Every relation, enterprise and occupation promises well at the start. Every new home gives promise of contentment and of pure and growing affection. Every scheme, ordinance or system devised by men for their common protection, improvement or happiness is full of hope in its beginning. The founders of dynasties, governments and institutions are grandly optimistic. But who can say that affairs may not take so disastrous a turn as to justify the forebodings of the most gloomy pessimist? Heraclitus bewailed with weeping the wickedness of men; Democritus jeered at their follies. But the tears of the one and the laughter of the other spoke alike the failure of men in their search for a happiness that should not only satisfy, but endure.

Jesus redeems life from this failure. He saves it from the laughter of fools on the one hand, and from the sneers of cynics on the other. He keeps it from becoming either tragedy or comedy. He takes up the feast where the guests were ready to abandon it in disgust or despair, prolongs it with honor and makes it a success. With Christ in his heart, no man need ever outlive any true enjoyment of the world. Christ in the heart keeps pure and fresh the Christian's love for nature, for his friends, for society, for literature, science and art. He that loves the Bible keeps relish for all good books. He that takes Christ with him finds

unabated enjoyment in all rational social festivity. The Christian is no complainer, no misanthropist, morose and soured with the world. He enjoys life more and longer than he does or can who has not Christ for a friend and fellow-guest. Christ is staying power to the spirit. The Christian outstays the worldling, even at the world's own banqueting table.

We are not necessarily low-lived although we be ever so keenly alive to that which is low. To be low-lived is to be satisfied with that which is low. It is not his fondness for eating that makes the glutton. It is that eating is what he most cares for and lives for. The enthusiastic student enjoys the pleasures of a well-spread table, and enjoys them none the less, but rather more, because of his fondness for study. Be his relish for books never so keen, he is still not in the least ashamed to boast that he has a good appetite and a good cook.

Yet, let the student, also, beware. Is he so wholly given to study that he begins to care less and less for his friends? Has the young man or woman away at school or college found home-love dying out of his or her heart? To that extent, then, is he or she low-lived. It was of such a one, a favorite daughter, that a sorrowful father once said to me, "True, I have gained a scholar, but I have lost a child!"

There is the like warning, too, for fathers and mothers—for fathers so devoted to business, club-

life, or politics; for mothers so surrendered to the exactions of social or even philanthropic ambition as to justify the children's lament: "True, we have gained a captain of industry, finance, letters or art; true, we have gained a society-star, but we have lost a father, a mother, and a home." To the extent of such parental neglect, such husbands, wives, fathers and mothers are low-lived. It is but a kind of self-degradation; the sacrificing of a higher form of life to a lower.

Not that there is in this the least implied censure of any sort whatever of worldly ambition, enterprise or success. God is Himself the greatest of legislators and rulers, of farm, forest and mine proprietors; of geometricians, architects and artists. Take a good look at "Solomon in all his glory," and then consider God's "lilies." He likes to see His children, made in His own image, till farms, develop mines, plan great engineering works, build dwelling-houses, warehouses, ships, halls of legislation, justice, science and art. "Every house is built by some man." This is all secular, indeed; but it is, or should be, much more than that. There is, or should be, a sacredness in it all. Such sacredness there is for the builder who reverently considers that "He who made all things is God"; and that among the "all things" is the builder Himself. The crown and radiance of the whole world's business ambition and enterprise is this filial recognition of the Father's love. Let this thankful acknowledg-

ment be wanting, and God may well complain, "True, I have gained a husbandman, an engineer, an architect, a jurist, a statesman, a general, an orator, a financier, an artist, a scholar; but, alas, I have lost a child!"

The worldling is the wedding-guest to whom the wine and the delicacies of the feast are all and all. And herein is the world's sin.

## IX

### OUR ONE CONCERN

*What is that to thee? Follow thou me. John 21:22.*

These seven disciples are now at a standstill, knowing not whither to go or what to do. For the three years past all has been plain. They have been doing their work under the immediate direction and supervision of the Master. But, although He has twice appeared to them since His resurrection, He has given them no instructions as to future service. Has their apostolic commission, then, expired? If so, will it be renewed, and when? The over-strenuous Peter is impatient of delay. He will do what he can. Until there are again more men to catch, he will again catch fish. He does not say tentatively, "Suppose we go a-fishing, then?" "I am going," he says, in his bold, independent fashion. The six falling in, they all start together for the lake, pull out from shore, drop anchor and cast the net. Making no catch, they row, anchor and cast again. They try their luck in this place and that, but without success. Undisciplined landsmen would have given up in disgust; would have tumbled the limp net into the boat, pulled straight to shore and scattered to their homes long before midnight. Not so with these seven experienced fishermen. Too well they know the fickleness of



their craft to think of farming the sea as the farmer farms his fields. With the fisherman's proverbial patience they toil through the entire night till the stars fade and the east reddens with the dawn.

Now, looking shoreward, they see a stranger standing there near the water's edge. He calls aloud to ask whether they have anything on board for a breakfast. "No, we have toiled all night, but have taken nothing." "Cast on the right side of the boat and you shall find." No sooner does the net now settle and spread than they find it dropped into a school of fishes—so full, directly, that they cannot pull it in—not to be drawn but dragged.

John has his hands on the ropes of the net with the hands of the rest; but no sooner does he feel the weight and motion of the darting and struggling prey than a new thought strikes him. Casting a searching glance at the stranger on the beach, in a quick, eager undertone he says to Peter, "It is the Lord!" John is the first to see, but Peter is the first to act. "What! the Lord, *my* Lord, my kind, forbearing, forgiving Master! This is now the third time He has come to see me since His resurrection, and not a word, not a look or slightest hint has He given me about my sleeping in that sorrowful garden, or about my following Him afar off when His enemies were leading Him away, or about my again and again denying that He was any friend or even acquaintance of

mine." No sooner does he catch John's words, "It is the Lord," than he lets go the net, snatches up his coat from the bottom of the boat, throws it on, leaps into the sea, now swimming and now wading to shore, leaving the six to bring in the loaded net as best they can, while he hastens to look once more into those dear eyes whose glance of mingled pity, reproof and love in the judgment hall there broke his unsteadfast heart and sent him out alone in the darkness, weeping bitterly.

If Peter has a lurking dread lest that sorrowful and reproachful look may now be repeated, he is not long in discovering that such fear is groundless—equally so if he has feared lest, although Jesus may forgive, He will never again take back as a trusted friend one who had proved faithless in the hour of such extreme trial.

We, alas, who are ourselves so very imperfect, count it magnanimity if we go so far only as to say of one who has once shown himself inconstant, "Yes, I forgive him, but I can never again trust him." Poor, pitiable magnanimity! Not so Jesus to his once weak and erring disciple. He not only freely forgives him, He gives him again his freest and fullest confidence. He trusts and honors him just as completely as though Peter had never deserted and denied Him. Jesus does indeed in the most delicate way awaken Peter's grief by thrice asking, "Lovest thou me?" but when comes the appealing answer, "Lord, thou



knowest that I love thee," the appeal is at once followed by the thrice-given renewal of his apostolic commission, "Feed my sheep"—at the same time foretelling for him a life of faithful service to be crowned at its close with the glory of martyrdom.

We cannot doubt that Peter was given this prediction as a needed check to his naturally too impetuous and self-confident disposition. The chastened spirit with which he now follows the Master is in striking contrast with his once forward boast, "Though all should forsake and deny thee, yet will not I." Methinks he is now saying to himself, "Yes, my Lord is taking me at my old word. I said that I would die for him and to that test it seems I am one day to be brought." And feeling now his weakness more deeply than ever before, we are sure of the unutterable longing with which his heart goes out for that steadfast strength which shall keep him henceforth unswervingly true and loyal to the end.

We see, too, how entirely natural it is that on turning round and seeing John, he should ask, "Lord, and what shall this man do? Thou hast appointed for me the life by which I am to prove my love for thee and the death by which I am to glorify God. What is his work and his end to be? Shall we who have alike enjoyed privileged companionship with thee, who were together on the Mount of Transfiguration and at the Resurrection-tomb, share also the martyr's doom, or must I alone be carried whither I would not?"

This concern of Peter about the future of John our Lord sharply reproves: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Stumble over it as we may, the fact remains that God does make marked differences in both the lives and deaths of even his equally loved children. Of the eleven apostles John alone was spared martyrdom. Persecuted, banished, often in jeopardy of his life, he yet died in his bed in a good old age. He tarried, according to the foretelling, until Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem—it having pleased God to set him apart from the rest for the honored task of completing the canon of his revealed and written Word.

An unaccountable, if not unfair, discrimination seems, at first view, to be made here against Peter. His own later warning, indeed, implies how entirely natural it is for us to wonder at the "fiery trial" which even the best beloved of our brethren are sometimes appointed to endure. Of a certain friend, for example, I am tempted to say, "He is, so far as I can see, no more of a Christian than am I. Why, then, should God give to him so much better a time, so much more honored a position, than he gives to me?" Who can tell? Health and sickness, weakness and strength, toil and ease, poverty and wealth, lowliness and loftiness of rank, ten talents and two—these widely different gifts and experiences God does either

ordain or permit. To some He gives all the abounding comforts of this life "and heaven besides." What concern of mine if He does? My course is plain. I have but to follow Christ—sure, if I do, that however hard and rough the way, it will lead to the same bright and happy heaven at last—brighter and happier, it may be, since the heavier the cross, if patiently borne, the richer the crown.

Give our blind, rebellious impatience its way and it would make a quick average of these so unequally distributed gifts, attainments, prosperities and adversities. Thus of one who has been long and signally prospered we are tempted to say: "Never mind; his turn will come one of these days!" Perhaps not. His "turn," in that sense, may never come at all. It may please the Master to give him a smooth and pleasant path to the very end. "What is that" to me? Is there, then, such a superabundance of happiness in the world that I should enviously wish that there were less?

Two ambitious sons of an ambitious mother once asked Jesus for what they mistakenly imagined were the two highest honors in his gift. The answering rebuke and questioning test are as fitting now as they were then: "How poor and unworthy is your estimate of me and of my kingdom! Enough, if you partake with me of this my cup and of this my baptism, which speak not of any earthly glory but only of loving service

and sacrifice for the relieving of the suffering, the comforting of the sorrowing, and the saving of the lost."

## X

### SELF-HARMING HASTE

*Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. Acts 16: 28.*

Paul and Silas were fortunately a little too quick for their despairing prison-keeper. A second or two more and he would have made out of his own heart a new and bloody sheath for his drawn sword. Seeing the prison-doors open and supposing, naturally enough, that his prisoners had escaped, he knew that in the eyes of the law he was already as good as dead. Paul and Silas knew it, too. They would recall the old Hebrew usage illustrated by the soldier who said, on delivering a prisoner whom he had taken in battle to a fellow-soldier: "Keep this man; if by any means he be missing, then thy life shall be for the life of him," as also by what Jehu said to the eighty men appointed to keep guard over the worshippers of Baal: "If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him."

As for the Roman law, the Philippian jailer had every reason to expect the like fate with that of the sixteen soldiers whom Herod a few years before had ordered put to death for allowing their prisoner, Peter, to escape. His own case, indeed, seemed the more hopeless of the two—punishment

of Paul and Silas having been demanded by the popular fury aroused against them by the owners of the damsel out of whom, the day before, Paul had cast an evil spirit of divination; so fierce the mob that the magistrates, waiving the customary formalities of trial, had ordered them, having first been scourged, to be guarded with the utmost vigilance in prison. Whatever milder views the jailer may himself have taken of the alleged offence, his stern sense of official duty left him no choice. It was, we may reasonably conclude, out of no "gratuitous inhumanity," but in simple obedience to his instructions that he thrust the two men into the inner prison and made their feet fast in stocks.

The earthquake throb of Christ's rewarding love which brought joy to his two steadfast servants filled the jailer with despair. There was everything to heighten his dismay—the seismic shock, the bewilderment which attends being wakened from the first sound sleep of the night, the darkness, and, worst of all, his seeing by the light he had called for that the prison-doors were open, compelling instant belief that the prisoners whom he had been so strictly charged to keep had fled. Fully aware that no explanation or apology would avail him, in affright and despair he foresaw awaiting him only certain and speedy death. With the stern stoicism of a true Roman, he at once unsheathed his sword, resolved to avert from himself and from his friends the disgrace, at least, of a public execution.

For such self-destruction the jailer's way was, ethically speaking, easy and open. His conscience was not of a kind to make him afraid. Being but a Gentile, he had none of those sixth-commandment scruples which would have restrained a Jew. As for Roman sentiment, there had been no occasion to fortify himself beforehand by defiant membership in some city "suicide club." That sentiment as voiced by earlier and later philosophers, was on his side. "The ancient sage," said Chrysippus, "had the consciousness of an invincible mind within, which placed him above the power of fate. He was conscious of an entire equality in moral elevation with Jupiter himself. He was master of his own life and might take it whenever he found that he could no longer live in a manner worthy of himself. On this principle many noble Romans acted, not only when they wished to escape from the ignominy of despotism, but also when disease cramped their powers and rendered life insupportable." The case is cited of a man of threescore and seven lying under a incurable disease who, when his physician wished him to take nourishment, dismissed the doctor with the word, "My mind is made up;" upon which Pliny remarks, "I admire the spirit of the old man and wish I possessed it."

It was the teaching of Pliny that "Among the great evils of our earthly existence the greatest good which God has bestowed on man is the power of taking his own life," and it was in this prevail-



ing temper of sadness mixed with cold resignation that he encountered and fell a victim to the flames of Vesuvius.

Seneca maintained that "The eternal law has made nothing better for us than this, that it has given us only one way of entering life, but many ways of going out of it. . . . If thy mind then be melancholy and in misery, thou mayest put a period to this wretchedness. Wherever thou lookest, there is an end to it. Seest thou that precipice? There thou mayest have liberty. Seest thou that lake, that river, that well? Liberty is at the bottom of them. Seest thou that little tree? Freedom hangs upon it. Thy own neck, yea, every vein in thy body may be a refuge to thee from such servitude."

A few years only had elapsed since this stoical philosophy had been exemplified by the death of two of Rome's noblest sons on that very spot. After the victory of the imperial army under Anthony and Octavius in the battle at Philippi, Brutus and Cassius, who had staked the Republic on that single engagement, both perished by throwing themselves on their swords, escaping thus an ignominy they could neither avert nor bear by "flying with their hands when no longer able to fly with their feet." To these examples of desperate determination this Philippian jailer is about to add another, but that instantly the tables are turned. The warden is now become the ward. The two men whom he has been keep-



ing from mob violence are now to keep him from self-violence and self-destruction. Seeing his forlorn and desperate purpose, Paul cries out with a loud voice and just in time to prevent the fatal stroke, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here."

Another marvel in this scene of wonders—prisoners declining to be rescued and, in place of killing the guard, preventing the guard from killing himself. Bent a moment ago on destroying himself, the jailer is now all anxiety to know how he shall save himself; not for this world, but for that other world into which, all unprepared, he was about to plunge. "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" is the question which he instinctively feels that these two wonderful men can answer.

When morning came, on what a scene did it dawn? Not on a suicide's ghastly death-wound; not on a widowed mother and fatherless children; not on souls shrouded still in heathen doubt and hopelessness; but upon a household of truth-enlightened, believing, baptized, saved and rejoicing disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To be on our guard against either hasty utterance or act in time of sudden distress or danger; to remember that, bad as things are, they may not be nearly as bad as they seem; to bear in mind that the "unknown being always the region of terror," discouragements look more discouraging when seen through discouraged eyes; that things may be just ready to brighten when they look the darkest; never to forget the wrong of resorting

to any rash, desperate, dishonest, doubtful or self-harming expedient for obtaining relief; to know that "God will not have us break into His councilhouse or spy out His hidden mysteries," but that we must wait His time with watching and prayer—such are the lessons embodied for us in the Philippian story.

To a man bereft at a stroke of property, children, and health, a foolish woman once said, tauntingly, "What of your God now? Curse him and then die and be done with it." The man did better. He gave to the world, instead, a world-old and much-needed lesson on the happiness of enduring. By reason of it all the generations since have heard of and seen two things which it would have been an unspeakable loss to have missed—"The patience of Job and the end of the Lord."

What the Lord's beginnings may be with us in this world matters comparatively little since, as both Job and the jailer found, "His end" shows Him to be "very pitiful and of tender mercy."

## XI

### THE WEIGHING OF A KING

*Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.* Dan. 5:27.

Risen at length by inheritance to the throne of a great empire, a monarch has presented to him the possibility, through right ruling, of such usefulness and renown as even Gabriel might envy. Will he see this path of honorable fame, and, so seeing, will he follow it? Will he stand at attention before the Muse of History as, pointing to an as yet unsullied page, she bids him fill it with a record of noble deeds? Will he heed those purer promptings of his nature which counsel him to live not selfishly for his own, but, self-sacrificingly, for his people's good? Not for a few years of ignoble pleasure, but for an age-long term of worthiest recompense? Will he be instructed by the example of his discrowned father, who, for his self-idolizing pride, was smitten with lunacy, stripped of his royal robes, driven from the sons of men, his heart grown to be like the heart of a beast, his dwelling with the wild asses, fed with grass like oxen, and his body wet with the dews of heaven, until he should understand that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will? Will he be the true minister of God, a terror always to evil works but never to the good? Will he devise

only equal and just laws and be firm and impartial in their execution?

Here is one path bright and glorious; sure to shine more brightly and gloriously to the very end of however prolonged a reign.

Sadly enough, however, there is this other and wholly unlike path. His throne may be the seat of pride and obstinate self-will. Conceiving himself to be raised above that strict accountability to which men of lower place and blood are held, he may drink in the flattery which is sure to whisper that the throned heir of so vast an empire need, in shaping his course, neither to fear God or to regard man. Taking no counsel but of his own passions and caprices, he may become insolently despotic and cruelly vindictive; may abuse his power of patronage to gratify personal favoritism and revenges, calling around him only such self-seeking advisers as shall keep him undisturbed, both by the wrongs, miseries and protests of his people, and by the hidden dangers which menace the stability of his throne.

Which path will this monarch choose? The two choices are the balances in which he is to be weighed and by which is to be found and declared what manner of man he is in his inmost heart. During the seventeen years of his reign the long-suffering Arbiter holds patiently aloft the trembling scales. Now strikes the hour when the Weigher lowers the beam. The weighing is ended, the unimproved opportunity is irrecovera-

bly gone. This last banquet of idolatrous mirth fills at once the measure of God's forbearance and of the monarch's guilt. No sooner is the Hand which has so long held the balance disengaged from that secret task, than it comes forth and writes over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the King's palace:

**"WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING."**

After the weighing, the finding. After the finding, the marking.

After the marking, the irreversible doom: "In that night was Belshazzar slain, and Darius, the Median, took the kingdom."

The desire to know beforehand the character and qualifications of those with whom we contemplate having either social or business intercourse finds expression in the confident boast of practical phrenology. By practitioners in this so-called science, intelligence offices are opened in which the skillful manipulator of heads offers himself as an infallible guide to the safe selection of both intimate companions and associates in business. The attempt is thus made to put prophecy in the place of probation, and, by so doing, to revolutionize the world-old method for the determination of character, endowment and adaptation. However sincere the attempt, it is both futile and misleading. For the clear ascertaining of such mental and moral values, the actual conduct of

life is the only accurately weighing instrument. Opportunity is the one true test; the seeing how any man does what it is given him to do. In every home, office, shop, store, school of learning, hall of legislature, are poised invisible scales by which are silently weighed husband and wife, father and mother, child, brother and sister, merchant and clerk, capitalist and laborer, teacher and pupil, law-maker, judge and executive official. By improvement, mis-improvement or non-improvement of afforded opportunity is each probationer both tried and made. Antecedent demonstration is altogether out of the question. Until thus tested the probationer does not himself know just what manner of man he is. Whether it be in the home or in business, the men and the women who, year after year, make a failure of life are as much an astonishment to themselves as they are to their acquaintances and friends.

In this present life of ours in this way tested may be seen as in a mirror the life that is to come. The fleeting fashion of this world becomes the fixed fashion of the next. In this present scene of things is enclosed the germ of that spiritual kingdom whose issues take hold on eternity—those principles of moral order which must determine each man's place in the coming world. Our proneness to dangerous familiarity with the opportunities and momentous possibilities of the everyday life we are now living, gives startling significance to the Master's words, "Notwithstanding, be ye



sure of this, that the kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto you." In the different courses and characters here taken and formed one sees the finger of God pointing silently to the awards of eternity. We mistake if we think of the "day of judgment" as the weighing day. That day is simply the day for declaring the result of this earthly trial and assigning to each man that "place" which he has already made "his own"; his final answer to the question asked day by day of his earthly life now ended, "Will this man glorify the God in whose hand his breath is and whose are all his ways?"

## XII

### UNUSED SPICES

*Now, on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared. John 24:1.*

Love is love, however blind or mistaken its methods. Were the "spices" which the Marys and the "others with them" brought to the sepulchre, in sorrowing love for their buried Lord, less odorous or precious because not needed?

Our careful and costly preparations for doing some special work for the Master may turn out to have been utterly wasted. We find things to be quite the opposite of what we expected. Health gives out at the very moment of intended action; or, through unlooked-for reverses, the means fail just at the last for doing what we had set our hearts on accomplishing. The devoted Lowrie goes down in the Bay of Bengal with the ship which is nearing the land, to bless which with his missionary labors he had made long and expensive preparation.

A father has planned to give the best education he can to an only son; but the son dies on the very threshold of his educational career. The father's generous hands are stayed and held.

A mother makes a long and tedious journey to see a sick child, taking with her carefully-prepared gifts for her child's relief and comfort.



But she has no sooner come than she is told that her child is no longer living. What now of the gifts, of which her loving hands are full? The dear one, on whom she is ready to bestow them, is no longer here to receive them.

In what strange perplexities are we thus sometimes overwhelmingly plunged! How inscrutable God's dealings with us and ours!

But not always, and not for long, does the Father mean that His children shall be kept in harrowing suspense, nor long be balked in the expression of their love. Men, in shining garments, appear to the baffled and wondering disciples with words of explanation, of promise and of larger hope. The love of these faithful disciples shall find expression still—only in higher, purer and more joyous ways. How much better, heart-satisfying worship of a risen and ever-living Saviour, than spices, however odorous and costly, for a dead and buried Christ!

It may be, instead, that the way to our intended work proves to be more open to us than we had at first thought. We may find the stone rolled away for us—an obstacle removed we could not have ourselves surmounted—so that we can enter more quickly, even than we had supposed, the field of our purposed deed of love. But then the field itself we find to be altogether abandoned. That on which we were about to bestow our labor is gone; we know not whither.

With God, motive governs and determines the

reward. The motive right and pure, lamented mistakes turn always, in the end, to joyous surprises.

What became of those first Sunday's spices? They have a precious existence still. Although unused, yet, like the spikenard, that *was* used before His burial, they at once took on the power of living and most persuasive speech. "Wherever this Gospel is preached," with what a tongue do they tell even us of the ignorance and unbelief of our sorrow, and of the greater, more exalted and more glorious scope of God's plans respecting Jesus and ourselves!

Odorous spices and beautiful flowers, if you will; you who drop unbidden tears over the graves of your loved ones—spices and flowers and tears, but never, with them, words of lamentation and despair. Let our thoughts rather be of angels, in shining garments, with whom the ascended souls of our departed are even now walking, and of Jesus, who walks with them evermore by the banks of the river of life.

### XIII

## REINTRODUCTIONS

*And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.*  
Luke 24:31.

It is a common enough experience that an acquaintance to whom we were years ago introduced seems to us, after a time, so changed in manner or appearance that reintroduction becomes necessary to recognition. "He has grown so out of our knowledge" is our way of explaining it. We chide ourselves for our obtuse imperception, realizing that the embarrassment it has occasioned us might have been avoided had we been more discerning of our friend's real character, or had we followed more intelligently his developing purpose and career.

John had introduced Jesus as "The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Jesus had Himself told His disciples beforehand of His death and resurrection as indispensable to the accomplishing of this His great work. A more careful weighing of this foretelling, and the two in their walk to Emmaus on that first Lord's Day afternoon would not have talked to one another in the doubtful, sad and fearful way they did; they would have been spared that reproof from the unrecognized friend who had joined them, "Oh, fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken," and they would not have

needed the reintroduction He gave them of Himself as their risen Lord at the breaking of bread. His resurrection would then have been to them not a surprise, but an expected and joyous fulfilment.

Their understanding having been thus once opened, we look naturally to see the disciples guard themselves more carefully against any further discounting of the promises and predictions of Jesus. For a time they do. They continue with one accord in prayer and supplication for the promised Spirit. The manner of its outpouring was more startling by far than was the manner of the resurrection. The fact of the resurrection was disclosed with the utmost quietness—disclosed gradually to but a few at a time. Pentecost came suddenly. It came with a rush—a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind. Cloven fiery tongues appeared. Once it would have affrighted them to hear such a sudden rushing sound, and to see such tongues of fire, even had they been playing on the ceiling or upon the walls of the chamber where they were sitting. These forked fires came straight down from above and, sitting, hold their place upon the head of each of them. Startling indeed! Yet are they not in the least startled. They do not count it strange, but begin at once to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance. Jesus has no need to reintroduce Himself to them as bountiful bestower of wisdom and power by the

Holy Ghost. Recognizing Him as their gracious promiser steadfastly making good to the full the utmost that He has promised, they begin at once, with no fear of failure, to speak with other and unfamiliar tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance.

Peter's intelligence is now broadened enough to understand the risen Christ as the real subject of prophecy in the sixteenth Psalm; yet he needs, and later on must receive, a reintroduction to Jesus as Saviour of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. So tightly closed by Jewish bigotry had been both mind and mouth that both had to be pried open by special vision and command. Only then could Peter say, "Of a truth I perceive."

Alas, that some of us should have needed, through our purblind "slowness of heart to believe," so many re-introductions to God as our Father with all that tenderest fatherliness implies; to Jesus as our loving, heavy-laden cross-bearer for our sin-burdened souls, and to the Holy Ghost as our full and immediate Sanctifier (if only we will let Him be), as our Comforter under whatever sorrow, and as our ever-ready and faithful Guide "into all truth."

When, if ever, shall we take it to our very heart of hearts, not once only, but once for all and forever, that God is all that He so fully declares Himself to be, that He means all that He promises, and that all which He has promised for both ourselves and the world He will, even to the uttermost, assuredly fulfil.

## XIV

### THE JOY OF IMMEDIATE SURRENDER

*Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.* Gal. 1:16.

Our houses were within eye-shot of one another, and we were back and forth in them almost every day. They, of the other house, were a young married couple. The union being every way a most congenial one, they were the happiest of the happy in their new home—a bond all the more strong and tender because hallowed by a common love to the same Saviour. His position as University professor being exactly suited to one of his fine literary tastes, combined with a fondness and aptitude for teaching, gave promise of a long, successful and happy career.

The thwarting of these fondly cherished hopes came in a wholly unlooked-for time and way. Soon after the birth of their second child, the young mother was taken with a severe pulmonary illness—not alarming at first, but steadily persistent and increasingly violent. The symptoms at length pointed to slow and remediless consumption. Although grievously concerned for the final result, the husband would not for weeks allow himself to despair of her ultimate restoration to her former unimpaired health. But, despite all that the best medical skill and the most faithful nursing could do, the physician was



forced, at length, to pronounce the case beyond hope of cure.

Calling at my friend's house soon after this fateful announcement, he met me at the door, took me by the hand, and led me into a room apart, and while we were kneeling in prayer, although it was with streaming eyes and in an agony of grief, he then and there made a full surrender of that dearest treasure of his heart, which he acknowledged as a now sovereignly recalled gift of his Heavenly Father's love.

The surrender was complete. The battle against doubt and dread and despair was fought to so clear and decisive an issue as never, even for a moment after, to be renewed; victory over death was won, weeks in advance of its approach. The invalid's trust had been serene and unshaken from the first. Now they are one in confident assurance that all has been ordered in infinite wisdom and love. Their earthly companionship is indeed soon to be broken, but it will, ere long, be renewed in a brighter and happier sphere, never to suffer interruption again.

The sick room, on which had rested the gloom of the husband's hitherto inconsolable grief, is now so brightened by his changed look and manner that friends are drawn to it by the cheerful greetings with which their visits are now met. The winter sunshine which floods the room typifies the confiding love which now brightens all hearts and faces. It is the joy of sweet and loving surrender. And it continues to the end.

In an even more beautiful way the invalid mother evinced the reality and depth of the like joy-imparting surrender. The new-born child was sent miles away in the country to a faithful nurse, who was in the habit of bringing the baby in, every few days, for the mother to see. A friend suggested to the mother that this was mistaken kindness on the part of the nurse, owing to the new pain which each of these partings must give her. "Oh, no," she said. "I had my final parting with the little fellow weeks ago. I gave him up to God as soon as I was assured that I was not going to get well. The pain of parting is over; let the nurse bring him in as she has been doing."

How well for us could we as God's children anticipate our appointed end by an immediate, full and loving surrender to Him of our whole earthly life and of all, even the most valued, of our earthly plans, ambitions, possessions and hopes. From the moment of such voluntary divesting ourselves of it, then, and then only, do we enter on our fullest enjoyment of the world.



## XV

### THE SILENT LIFE

*But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their hearts, he took a little child and set him by his side, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me. Luke 9: 47, 48.*

For one, I know of nothing on earth so sweetly hallowed, so exquisitely sacred, as the silent life of a little child; nothing which so directly and without the medium of any consciously intellectual process assures us of the being of God by bringing upon the spirit the hush of His over-shadowing presence. It was for those silent beatitudes which come only in answer to prayer that those far-seeing mothers who brought their little ones to Jesus, came asking that He would "lay His hands on them and pray."

The record is not that Jesus loved and prayed for little children as a class, but that He took them in His arms, one by one, and that, one by one, He blessed them. He was careful to individualize even little children; He said, "*This* little child." By so doing and saying He but repeated what was done and said, when His own mother having brought Him to the temple to do for Him after the manner of the law, the devout Simeon took Him in his arms and said, "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

Nor of little children only is it true, this per-

sonalizing by prayer. This silent life, this deep, ineradicable consciousness of his affinity with the unseen Creator and the unending hereafter, is that which more than ought else individualizes each and every man both to himself and God; which assures him that he is more than an inconsiderable fraction, more than an undistinguishable atom of some huge, agglutinated mass; that he is, instead, a distinct personal unit; a separate, whole, responsible member of the family and Kingdom of God; as surely, as completely so, as though he were the only child of the family, the sole subject of that divine Kingdom.

After the fight at Chattanooga those who were sent to bury the slain are said to have come upon a dead Union boy in a sitting posture—his back against a tree and in his lap a pocket-Bible lying open at the twenty-third Psalm. How, on the instant, does this one young man change for us the whole aspect of that battlefield! Before the battle we were thinking of the opposing armies only as two great wholes, as but two terribly destructive machines—the sole question at issue being which of the two were the more likely to out-match, out-fight, and out-destroy the other. But how completely is the whole struggling mass now resolved into distinct and rounded personalities; how flashed upon us the conviction that amid all the roar, confusion and carnage of battle, each soldier stands just as clearly apart to the All-seeing Eye as in the stillness and solitariness of

the closet of secret prayer. How blessedly real it makes for us the fact of a close, personal relationship to Christ, and the possibility that this relationship may be for each and every soul a union of intimate confidence; of sweet and indissoluble affection. How it raises us above the dreary monotony of all commonest things, lifting each soul to the sacredness of individual fellowship with the one all-merciful Father, the ever-loving Saviour, the all-comforting Spirit. Instead of the noun of multitude, "mankind," so cheerless in its vagueness and generality, how it gives us, in its stead, the warm, loving personality, giving us to Christ by our names and giving Christ by all His appropriate names to us; inviting us whenever we will to turn away from all the neglects, injustices, envies and cruelties of the world, and with the upward glance of the loving child's confidence to say, "The Lord is *my* shepherd; *I* shall not want. He leadeth *me* by the still waters. He restoreth *my* soul. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort *me*."

The Bible is, in this respect, just such a book as we might expect it to be, if it be indeed a message from God to us His children.

It was the sad lament of one of the greatest of heathen philosophers that "God does not care for individual men." But we see everywhere in the Bible that God does care for individual men. Over thirteen chapters of the book of Genesis are taken up with the account of His dealings with Abra-

ham; with only touches here and there of contemporaneous history, and those given to illustrate more fully the life and character of the patriarch. Over eight chapters are employed for the career of Jacob; over twelve for that of Joseph—thirty-three out of the fifty of which the book is composed. Joseph is not brought in to set off the grandeur of Egypt, but Egypt is introduced to show the care which God takes of Joseph. One whole book, and that one of the longest, is given to prove the regard which God had for one man struggling to keep his faith under manifold and overwhelming afflictions. Little is told us in that book of the arts, manners or politics of that day, but who has not heard of the “patience of Job and seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy”!

So, all through the New Testament, how many names are given with minute relation of time, place and circumstance, of those whom Jesus instructed, comforted and healed. Everywhere we see Him as a tender friend and helper, adapting his ministrations of mercy to the special needs of each separate one: “He calleth his sheep by name.”

The world is yet to be saved from the depersonalizing spirit of industrialism, commercialism and militarism by the self-integrating power of the silent life.

## XVI

### THE CROSS, A SYMBOL OF OBEDIENCE

*He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Phil. 2: 8.

In either the true son's or the true servant's "What wilt thou have me to do," the stress-word is "what," willingness to obey being taken for granted, whatever the command.

By some commands, however, the spirit of obedience is more severely tested than it would be by others. While "an angel would obey with equal alacrity, whether bidden to sweep a street or rule a kingdom," he might properly enough prefer the latter, were it his to choose.

The voluntary surrender, if for a time only, of rank, riches and honor, any sound mind will, "if it be possible," avoid. Jesus would gladly have escaped making such surrender, if He could. Had it only been His Father's will, He would have had pass from Him not only the cup of Gethsemane and Calvary, but that also of the Bethlehem manger, of life-long poverty and dependence and of the servant's form. As that could not be, His whole life from first to last was one continuous act of most perfect and willing obedience.

While, therefore, to the question, "For what did Jesus Christ come into the world," we have for the proximate and specific answer, "To save sinners," we also have given us, "To do the will

of God," as that ultimate and generic answer which the, as yet, unincarnated Christ Himself prefaced with, "Lo, I come."

What the Father did was to deliver His Son up to the world that the world might do with Him as it would. There was no call or occasion for God to stir up the avarice of Judas, the scorn of the elders, the malice of the priests, the time-serving fear of Pilate, the fury of the mob, the zeal of the soldiers to the carrying out of a familiar decree of blood. He had not to depute angels to ply the scourge, plait the crown of thorns, put on the mock apparel, drive the nails or thrust the spear. Men were at hand ready enough, unbidden and untempted, to do it all—the natural outworking of an enmity roused to rage by the fearless preaching of God's pure truth exemplified and confirmed by the preacher's sinless life.

To take one's cross, then, means the deliberately-formed determination to do one's whole duty at what hazard soever and at whatsoever cost—the extremest hazard possible being the hazard and loss of life itself. What the actual cost, no intending follower of Jesus can beforehand compute; whether a life of calm repose or whether it may be "given him on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake." Paul was shown, indeed, what great things he must suffer for the Master's sake, but it was only little by little as he went along. It was denied to Peter to know how John's career was to



differ from his own. Alike in fidelity, yet how unlike in service and in suffering—Peter crucified; John dying peacefully in his bed at a good old age! We pledge ourselves “in blank” when we become followers of Christ, leaving it entirely to Him to fill out the lines, but ready to honor whatever drafts, be they few or many, great or small, which He may make upon us for either service, sacrifice or suffering.

In one respect the obedience of Jesus to the death of the cross was an obedience which He alone could render. For while on the merely human side He came to his death as did Abel, Stephen and Paul to theirs—martyrs alike from the exasperating goodness of an unalterable purpose to do the will of God—yet to Jesus came a suffering deeper by far than that caused by Cain’s club, the witnesses’ stones or Nero’s sword—the agony and grief of a cross of expiation for the world’s sin, the chief anguish of which lay in the hiding from Him of His Father’s face.

That anguish His faithful followers are spared. To Stephen was vouchsafed the vision denied to the crucified Christ. While the stones were raining on the martyr’s head, lo, the heavens were opened and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. That which was actual to Stephen, the like steadfast faith will make virtual to any and every obedient child of God during however sorrowful a life, in however painful a death.

## XVII

### BEYOND PERADVENTURE

*He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He hath set judgment in the earth. Is. 42:4.*

Whenever and wherever are promoters or projectors, they must use such helpers as they can find, whether the selected agents are well adapted to their purposes or not.

Hence it is that merely human endeavors are so often blocked; sometimes by the dearth, incompetency or intractability of laborers; sometimes by the prejudice, narrow-mindedness or downright opposition of those whose concurrence is indispensable to the carrying on of the work; sometimes by natural obstacles almost insuperable; sometimes, as in the digging of the Suez and Panama Canals, by all three obstacles combined. Genius, combined with unconquerable determination, may indeed surmount these difficulties, yet, all the same, the difficulties do interfere with and delay, even although they may not ultimately defeat, the triumph of the projector.

Whenever and wherever God wants a man for any place or work, He has but to make him. He endows and trains him, brings him on the stage of action at exactly the right moment; then guides and sustains him until his work is done. "He knew who the man was that should deliver His people from Babylon, and called him by name



scores of years before he was born, saying of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure.' "

The purposes and plans of God proceed under His wise and wide survey with harmonious convergency to the desired end; even as the Amazon folds in his mighty embrace all his great eddies and sweeps on, unhindered by them, to the sea.

At a distance, we see rising from the threshing and winnowing floor only clouds of dust and chaff; we hear only the rumbling, rattling and clattering of wheels and shaken sieves. But, on closer inspection, we see streaming into the waiting bags the life-supporting grain.

So it were but a narrow, starved and pinched conception which would lead us to find ever in the clamor of political controversy, in the darkening of the air by sectarian strife, in the mad rush and din of money-getting greed; to find in any or all of these the slightest ground for discouragement to effort for the promised coming of the Kingdom of truth, righteousness, liberty and peace in all the earth.

In the vocabulary of that Kingdom the word "crisis" has, therefore, no place. Critical times there have, indeed, been in battles, sieges, revolutions, dynasties, governments; in the history of this and that movement for civic and political reform; of individual churches, missions, revivals. The crisis once passed, there has come either progress or decline, establishment or extinction. But

never has there been, never will there be, an uncertain point of danger in the carrying out of the Divine purpose for the world's redemption.

Rising slowly in its might, a huge wave rolls in from the ocean and dashes itself with a great roar on the beach. An inexperienced observer might well conclude that such a standard of energy as that could not long be maintained. The sea must sooner or later exhaust itself by such vast forth-putting of its power. So, for a brief interval, it would seem; the next few waves being so small and feeble. But presently in comes another long roll just as grand, just as irresistible as the first. Watch long as we will, we discover no abatement in the sea's strength. Our confidence in the constancy of the vast power at work is increased rather, the longer we look.

He shows himself to be but a like impatient and superficial observer of events who, from the occasional lessened activity of the church of Christ, argues the gradual exhaustion of either God's purpose or power to regenerate the world. Back of the truce with evil which He may seem at any time to have called, His unchanging love is preparing for new onsets and victories unmatched by any that have gone before. "The Mighty God," He is also the "Everlasting Father"; as unwearying in His purpose as He is unwasting in His power.

## XVIII

### NO COMPROMISE WITH TYRANNY

*Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind.* Ex. 10:26.

After the plague of flies, Pharaoh proposed a compromise. The Hebrews might go and sacrifice to their God, provided they would not in so doing leave the king's country.

"No," came the prompt answer, "we must be allowed to go as far and in whatever direction we choose—out into the wilderness, a good three days' journey at least."

"In that case," the king said stiffly, "you shall not go at all."

After the plague of the hail, however, he yielded enough to say, "Well, then, name your terms. How many of you are going?"

"Young and old, sons and daughters, flocks and herds; we are all going," was Moses' frank and bold reply.

"That will I never consent to. I will do this, though: I will meet you half-way. I will grant what I understood was all you asked for at the first. You men may go, but the women and children must stay. That is my last word."

Locusts and three days of pitchy darkness; then from the king a "hurry" call for the two commissioners; "I will meet you more than half-

way. Go, little ones and all; you need leave only your flocks and herds."

"No compromise," demands the man of God. "No meeting half-way; you must come all the way to meet us. 'Unconditional surrender' is the word. Our cattle must go too—every one of them. Not a hoof shall be left behind. It is all or nothing."

"All or nothing" is the demand and rightful claim of Jesus. No half surrenders, no nine-tenths, no ninety-nine-hundredths compromises. Those who came to him hoping for easier terms without exception failed to find them. He at once discouraged the would-be follower who wanted first to be assured that his following would not in the end leave him worse off than the fox without a hole or the bird without a nest. To another and yet another on the same occasion the Master said, "If you propose following me, it must be without any 'ifs' or 'buts'; even though one 'but' be, 'Let me first go and bury my father'; and another, 'Let me go first and bid farewell to them that are at home at my house.' " The furrow once started, no withdrawing the hand from the plow until the furrow is finished.

That husband or father who reverses the terms of Pharaoh's proposed compromise and says, "Yes, my wife and my children may join the Lord's pilgrim band and welcome," while himself hanging back, will find that no such family concession is accepted by the Master in lieu of his

own personal following. It was finding that he could not consecrate himself to Jesus unless he at the same time consecrated his "great possessions" that caused the rich young man to go away sorrowful.

No, "not a hoof behind." Along with that which is most precious—our purest and deepest affections—we must also bring as a willing sacrifice to Jesus that which is least and lowest; all that pertains to even our mere animal nature—so to eat and drink that with the temple of our bodies we may best glorify God.

"A prophet like unto me." In nothing was Jesus more like Moses than in thus demanding that our whole manhood; that families, that nations, that all our business and all our gains should accept without reserve his provided and offered deliverance from the bondage of the world's sin, to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

So distinctively is the spirit of God a spirit of peace and confiding gentleness that the dove, which is its emblem, takes readily by symbolic fitness to the care and protection of men. Secure in the house prepared for it, though it be one of unbarred door and open windows, it neither fears nor suspects harm, as it has no wish or thought of harming others.

But is not this gentle, peaceable, confiding disposition a constant menace to its very existence?

Does it not make the dove an easy victim of all ravenous birds of prey, leaving it utterly without defence against the grasping claw and tearing beak of hawk, eagle, and vulture? Must not their crafty rapacity always prove more than a match for its unwary weakness? And must not it and all its kind, therefore, in time, wholly perish and, through "survival of the fittest," leave to the fierce, the unscrupulous and the devouring full possession of the field?

The drift of things indicates already, and God is pledged to show, one of these days, beyond all further doubt or discussion, what that is which *He* judges fittest to survive—whether the meek, the gentle and the lowly, or that which from its stealthy perch watches for a sure moment in which to swoop down, seize, bear away and destroy. The success of hawks and vultures lies only in keeping themselves at a safe distance from the home-enclosures of men. Yet are they not by any means, as they complacently imagine, beyond reach always of the fowler's eye or marksman's ball. And when, struck at last by the avenging bolt, the disturber and destroyer tumbles from his proud eyrie, none are sorry and all are glad.

Year by year we see the noxious, even in nature, driven back within ever-narrowing circles, presaging its utter and final extinction. It may still have further lease of existence, but on one condition only—that it stop hurting; that it cease betraying the unsuspecting and harming the



helpless. There are chances ahead for the despot who shall see his mistake and be done with his despotism; for the envious, the malicious, the discourteous, the covetous, who shall quit their envy, their malice, their discourtesies and their greed. The asp and the cockatrice may survive, provided they no longer shoot poison from fang and eye, and so become harmless playmates of the little child. The "bear" may survive, if he can make up his mind to feed peaceably "with the cow," and the "lion," if he will learn to "eat straw like the ox."

More and more relentless and persistent must pursuit to the death be of all wrong, outrage and injustice against even the weakest, most uncomplaining and unresisting of our fellows—the pursuit kept up unfalteringly till the last unrepenting tyrant and tormenter shall, with the last viper and vulture, have perished from the earth.

In that good time coming the meek shall flourish and shall possess the land. When those who have kept themselves apart from their fellows in the selfish seclusions of place and power shall have been brought low, then shall room, and honor, and power, and plenty be given to the lowly.

The fittest will survive. No vulture to vex longer the freedom of the upper sky, the whole wide air shall thenceforward be safe and shall everywhere be winnowed only by the soft wings of peace.

## XIX

### PAUL'S QUARREL WITH PETER

*But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.*  
Gal. 2: 11.

Taking all the goodness out of the "good news" of salvation by grace alone, is the heresy against which Paul warns his Galatian brethren and to which he charges Peter with having once lent the sanction of his apostolic example.

"You know," writes he, in effect, "how I once fairly hated the word 'Christian'; how mad, how exceedingly mad, it made me to hear it spoken; how fiercely I fought it; how I persecuted and wasted the church of God. But when it pleased God, out of mercy to my ignorant unbelief, to show me the awful mistake I was making by revealing His Son to me and in me, I began forthwith to be as zealous for Christ as I had before been against him. Not only did I not ask authority or permission of those who were apostles before me; I kept wholly aloof from them; acting as I did under orders received directly from Christ himself. It was three years before I even went up to Jerusalem, and when I did go, the only apostles I saw there were Peter and James, the Lord's brother. With the work they were doing in the home field I did not interfere; did not even show myself to the churches of Judea. All they



knew about me was that I was now earnestly engaged in preaching the faith which once I destroyed.

"It was full fourteen years before I visited Jerusalem again. Then I told them the kind of free gospel I was preaching to the Gentiles. I told it to only the leading men there, and to them in the quietest way possible, as I did not wish to have my work hindered by unnecessarily antagonizing their Jewish prejudices. By this prudence I so carried my point that although Titus, who was with me, was a Greek, they did not compel him to be circumcised. The result was that the false brethren who come in on the sly to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ, and to bring us into bondage, could make no headway against us.

"It was some time after this that I had my first and only quarrel with Peter. He had come down to Antioch where I then was. At first, he did as I did; kept company with some who were not Jews, and even ate with them at the same table. He knew, as well as I did, that there was nothing wrong about that. In a way, he knew it better than I did. He had been favored with the special vision of the great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth, and word from God to tell him what it meant—the day's journey to Cesarea to tell the inquiring Centurion what he ought to do. 'You know,' he said, 'that it is an unlawful thing for a Jew to keep company or come to one of another nation, but God has showed

me that I should not call any man common or unclean.' In spite of that, there were some so intensely Jewish as to have censured Peter for doing at Antioch what he had done freely at Cesarea. Lingers still in the apostle some of the old timidity which led him thrice to deny his Lord in the judgment hall of Pilate. So afraid is he to have those whom James had sent down to Antioch see on what easy and familiar terms he is living with outcast Gentiles, that he withdraws and separates himself from them. When I saw this, and saw, too, how other Jews, and even Barnabas, were carried away with this dissimulation, I could not let such a cowardly compromising of the truth go, and I keep still. Loyalty to Christ and His gospel compelled me to speak out, and I rebuked Peter sharply and openly. I said to him before them all, 'If you, a Jew, live as do the Gentiles, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? Jews, as you and I are, we are now enlightened enough to know that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. For my part, I am ready to say always, and everywhere, that this grace, this gift of God, through His Son, is my sole reliance for pardon and salvation. I do not frustrate this grace; do not set it aside, and so dishonor it by putting a particle of trust in anything else whatsoever.' "

Penance is a false and blind substitute for repentance. It is misleading and mischievously op-

posed to the idea and fact of that free, full, immediate and unrevocable forgiveness by which true repentance is invariably followed. This, whether the penance take the form of wearing coarse clothes, ascetic abstinence from personal adornment, going barefoot, fasting, flagellation, or singularity of speech, dress or manners.

When the self-exiled, home-deserting son came to consider the great wrong he had been doing and had at last determined to do the best he could to make it right with his father, and when he went back and said frankly, "Father, I know that I have been doing wrong since I left you," what did the father say? Did he say, "My boy, you had good clothes on when you left home; here you are back in tatters. Wear your rags awhile longer that all may see what prodigality brings a young man to in the long run. Where is the ring I made you a present of at your last birthday? I buy no more jewelry for the pawn-shop. You went away well-shod; you come home barefoot. It will be a good reminder to go barefoot awhile longer. You always had a bountiful table to sit down at here at home. You ran yourself down and out until at last you had only husks to eat and only swine for messmates, and nobody to care whether you ever had anything better or not. I prescribe for a few weeks, by way of probation, a diet of bread and water."

Was that the way the father did? For rags, instead, it was a robe, and that of the very best.

For the empty hand that had been throwing husks to the swine, a ring. For the bare and bruised feet, shoes. For fasting, feasting; for gloom, gladness; for misery, merriment; for moans, music and dancing.

What the father would say or do to him in case he should return, the now penitent son did not know. But that was not for the son to consider. One thing he could do, and it was all he could do. He could go back to his father's house. One thing he could say, and it was all he could say: "Father, I have sinned." However it might turn out, he would do his part, leaving it to his father to do as he would.

Feeling as he did, I think that the son would have come back, even had he counted on being reproved and perhaps repulsed by his injured father. Certainly he was not prepared for the welcome that followed—the kiss, the ring, the best robe, the feast—all to express the father's gladness for his boy's return.

God give to these poor, hesitant, doubting, fearful hearts of ours to see deeper down than we have ever yet seen into the unsearchable depths of the Father's ever-welcoming, freely-forgiving, guilt-removing love.

## XX

### THE MULTITUDE OF THE SAVED

*A great multitude whom no man could number.*  
Rev. 7: 9.

It is both comforting and inspiring to note the different ways in which the earth's population and the population of heaven are increased.

Here, one goes out of the world almost as fast as another comes into it. Had it been all entrance and no exit, the globe's population, like the corn which Joseph gathered in Egypt, had long since exceeded the limit of practical notation. As it is, decrease by death keeps almost even pace with increase by birth. The most healthful city outgrows but slowly the enclosures of its dead. Through war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, volcano, fire or flood, the ratios may be so sadly and suddenly reversed that, as in Martinique, it becomes easier to count the living than the dead. While it may have taxed an antediluvian statesman's power of computation to sum that old world's population, a child now needs but his "eight" fingers to tell how many souls were then "saved by water." To know at any nightfall the aggregate of the earth's inhabitants, we must take from that day's census of the newly come, the evening list of the newly gone.

But, thanks be to the Love which we know has provided it, there is another world—another and



a better. Were it not so, He who knows both worlds would surely have "told" us. In that world whosoever comes, comes to stay—no departing and hence no parting; no cemetery census there to be subtracted from that fair city's ever-growing population; no name ever dropped from that heavenly directory, the Lamb's Book of Life; the new heaven, new in that it is convulsed by no hurricane, cyclone, tempest or tornado; the new earth, new in that no life is ever lost by sickness, earthquake, volcano, fire or flood.

Now and then an earthly monarch sees with alarm that the population of his empire has come to a stand-still. Never so with our Immanuel's Kingdom. It is ever and forever on the increase; a Kingdom of which there is no more an end of souls than of years. About this wonderful expansion St. John the Divine had in Patmos his once narrow notions wonderfully expanded. He "heard," but what he afterward "saw" was infinitely more than what he had heard. What he heard was but "a number"; the number of "all" that were "sealed of the tribes of the children of Israel." That exact calculation of the chosen, the covenant people of God, is as far as at one time even the "beloved disciple" would have gone, had he like Jesus been asked, "Are there few that be saved"? But after this numerical hearing the Revelator *sees*—and lo, "a great multitude whom no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues standing before the

throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands and crying with a loud voice, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.' ”



## XXI

### A QUICK TURN FROM SORROW TO JOY

*And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. Matt. 28:8.*

On their way to the sepulchre the two Marys are walking together in the same dark shadow that from the beginning has shrouded the hearts of mourners visiting the last resting-places of their dead. They go, looking to find all at the tomb as they saw it left by Joseph and Nicodemus on the preceding Friday afternoon. It is as quiet as it was then, but in all else how changed! The stone lying at a distance away and, where it had stood, a black open doorway instead. The accustomed signs of death are gone. Can it be that they had missed the way; that they have come to the wrong spot, as is not unfrequently the case amid the intricate windings of a modern city cemetery? No, they cannot have mistaken either the path or the place. The path from Jerusalem is both short and plain. The sepulchre is by itself, in a private garden. The place and its surroundings are recognized as soon as seen; the same stone-hewn vault, the same rocky shelf on which they saw tenderly laid the lifeless body of their Lord. Here lay His head, and there His feet. But there where lay His feet are now only the linen bandages in which the body was

wound, and here wrapped together in a place by itself is the napkin that was about His head. Even the silence is changed; more profound and painful than it would be were the body still here.

At this so strangely altered appearance the two friends are most deeply and painfully perplexed—the perplexity soon turns to affright as close beside them is suddenly seen standing, with lightning-like countenance and snow-white apparel, an angel of the Lord. Falling upon their knees they lean forward, bowing their faces in terror to the ground.

From this terrified suspense they are quickly relieved, however, by the loving tones of the angel's voice which is as fear-dispelling as his words: "You seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen. Come see the place where the Lord lay."

But why this "Come"? Had they not already and but just now seen the "place" and noticed carefully how everything about it appeared? Yet well does the angel say, "Come"; so differently will the self-same burial-place look to them, now that they have a messenger from the Father to stand beside them and talk to them of the resurrection. When at the angel's word they do rise and look again, behold, the tomb is no longer the dread place to them that it was before. In that chill gloom which had made of the two nights and of the intervening day one long night of death, their Lord had indeed lain. Why is He not here

now? Is it because either Pilate's band, the faithless gardener, or the faithful disciples had first disrobed and then stolen him away? And is it the angel's comfort that he will at once go and dispute with Pilate about the body so that, recovered and restored to its former resting-place, these doubly-sorrowing friends may yet re-embalm Him with their own waiting spices and with this same fine linen which Joseph bought and which the grave-robbers were considerate enough to leave behind?

Far sweeter solace than that! The assurance that never again will Jesus need either grave-clothes or spices or even a tomb; that having entered once for all that dismal waste and unbound all its dread fetters, never shall the place where he lay wear again the gloomy aspect of death; that the dark door of the sepulchre out of which he returns conqueror is to be evermore the gateway, instead, of never-ending life.

To complete their joy the angel makes the women sharers with himself in this ministry of consolation: "Go quickly and tell His disciples. This is still a troubled morning for them as it has been for you. Lost in a maze of sorrow; the object of their deepest love and fondest hopes gone, they know not whither; stunned and bewildered, they wander about, desolate and aimless orphans. Be you the angels to cheer them as I have comforted you. Tell them that Jesus is alive and that He loves them still. Tell them to go to their

Galilean home whence He called them and whence they followed Him, and that there amid the places of their most loving communion and away from the scenes of His humiliation and death, they shall see Him. Lo, I have told you !”

They need no second telling. The wonderful news gives them angels’ tongues and almost angels’ wings. They depart quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy and run to bring the disciples word.

That angel of our Lord’s resurrection still lives. Would it comfort us to find him some day standing in his shining garments by the graves of our own loved ones, and to have him assure us that they still live, albeit their bodies still remain buried? A surer guide, a holier comforter we already have in the ever-present Jesus who, Himself, the resurrection and the life, bids us turn our eyes up from our loved ones’ graves to the mansions He has gone to prepare for them in His Father’s house.

Have we sometimes exclaimed in bitterness of anguish, “O Elmwood; O Woodmere; O Woodlawn; O Greenwood; how you mock me with your beauty because you are so dumb!” Taking Jesus with us always in these visits of sorrowful remembrance, we will say that no more. The friends we mourn are with Him who has gone before, in far better than all places of even sweetest earthly communion, into heaven itself.

Such is the new, bright chapter in the annals

of bereavement which was opened for us and for the world by that early-morning walk of the spice-bearing Marys to the sepulchre of their risen Lord.

## XXII

### SATAN'S FALL FORESEEN

*I beheld Satan, as lightning fall from heaven.*  
Luke 10: 18.

A carpenter's apprentice was once asked by his sick pastor, at whose house he was then working, to offer a prayer at his pastor's bedside. Many a young man in such circumstances would, out of natural diffidence, have asked to be excused. But that young mechanic consented, and so moved was the pastor by his prayer that he took the young apprentice into his family and educated him for the ministry, and, as it proved afterward, for missionary work in India. This led that same pastor to the establishment of a Manual Training School for needy Christian young men, and that school, on being removed from Germantown to Easton, Pa., became the nucleus of Lafayette College. That modest, uneducated carpenter's apprentice saw nothing beyond what seemed to him at that time a simple but difficult duty; but what great and far-reaching results did Christ foresee then and does the world see now!

The mother of Samuel J. Mills dedicated him when an infant to God. But in and beyond that faithful mother's act of consecration what did Christ see? Looking down the coming years, Christ traced the career of that infant child; saw him a student in Williams College; saw him re-

newing there his mother's act of consecration; dedicating himself to foreign missionary work; enlisting a number of his fellow-students in the same cause and becoming the virtual founder of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. What did Christ see in that mother's simple act of consecration? He saw the old and dreadful superstitions of two continents reeling to their fall.

The work done by the Seventy sent out, two and two, was far greater than they had themselves been at all aware of. They had been wholly taken up with the success of their work from day to day, and beyond that there was nothing which they could see. But Jesus tells them that he saw a great deal more and a great deal further. He assures them that their humble work done faithfully, although on so small a field, was to have a world-wide influence; that it would have to do with the complete overthrow of the Prince of Darkness in this world; "Behold," he said, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

Jesus sees as only Jesus can see, how far any act done by him in however humble a way, in however humble a sphere, may extend. But He assures us that every such act helps toward the utter casting down of error and wrong and toward the full and everlasting enthronement of truth and righteousness.



## XXIII

### PERFECT AT LAST

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.* Matt. 5:48.

The schoolboy's crooked up-and-down strokes on the first page of his copy-book are to the on-looker an almost ludicrous contrast to the finely engraved model above; a discouraging contrast, no doubt, to the pupil himself. The last line on the page shows a noticeable, perhaps, but still very distant approach to the perfect strokes at the top. Yet through each successive page the improvement continues until at the end of the many-leaved book is a line of which the pleased and patient master is pleased to say, "That, my boy, is as well done as I could have done it myself."

"Perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," is no mere tantalizing theory, no impossible command. There have been heart-heroes who have said, "It shall be done," and who have done it. Paul does not encourage or excuse any half-hearted "beating of the air" by saying, "I am trying hard as I ever can to keep my body under." He keeps it under. Stephen does not try merely to keep his temper before the prejudiced and persecuting council with its suborned false witnesses. He keeps it; keeps it perfectly. When at length he feels the thud of the cruel

stones, his "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" is a perfect echo of the "Father, forgive them" of Him who had felt the thrust of the cruel spear.

Our trying is a poor trying enough at first, but our faith being fuller of force than our trying is of faults, we do not give over until at length we succeed so well that the Master smiles upon us an approving and rewarding, "I could Myself have done it no better."

Looking out in the dead of winter over his snow-imprisoned acres, the farmer (but that he has been otherwise instructed by experience) might exclaim despairingly, "What can I do to be saved from threatened hunger and starvation? To melt this forbidding mass of snow and ice is beyond my most earnest and toilsome endeavor. Were I even to cut and burn a hundred forests, the mighty hecatomb would not suffice to warm the soil or quicken the seed or ripen the harvest on a single field."

True. But coming already on its way is the summer; God's loving offer of help to His children in their mortal need, and ready, otherwise, to perish.

His offer accepted, on what a scene of rejoicing activity does the Father look complacently down—a million plows turning the soil on hillsides and in valleys, by great rivers and on boundless prairies; harvests shouted home by myriads of exultant reapers; happy households gathered

around bountifully spread tables; the great globe's teeming population kept alive and saved.

What of the unspeakably greater good to be secured for the soul? How supply *its* famishing hunger with the bread of life?

"Looking at my heart and life," says one, "I behold a scene more wild and desolate than snow-wrapped fields; more despairingly enchained by more than Arctic frosts of pride, covetousness, envy, worldly ambition, self-righteousness and unbelief. Though art, taste, refinement and philosophy were to kindle all their fires and compass me with all their brilliant and crackling flames, they could not thaw the icy impenitence of my soul; could not cause to spring one holy desire or ripen one holy act."

True, again. But if God give one summer for the life of the body, "how much more" will He give another for the life of the soul!

Shall I be forever deploring, then, as though it were a just cause or excuse for despondency, that *unless* some all-powerfull Friend undertake for me, I can never repent, believe, and love unto salvation and eternal life?

From all such deprecatory and despairing negatives God's full provision and loving promise bid me wholly and at once to break away; bid me leap, rather, to say with most grateful though most humble positiveness, "Without Christ I could indeed do nothing, but such is not my case. I *have* Christ and with Him I can do all things."

## XXIV

### LOVE'S "FINALLY"

*Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as it is also with you. II. Thes. 3:1.*

Nearly two-thirds of St. Paul's letter (the Second to the Thessalonians) had been taken up with matters which concerned the brethren to whom he wrote; not a word as yet about himself; about his own labors, hardships, dangers and self-denials, although these had been so many and so great. So full was his loving heart of concern for his brethren's trials, perils and temptations that he had cast about him for that by which they might be shielded, comforted and encouraged. Only then does he say "finally"—"for what remains," as the original is. As much as to say, "I will improve the little time I have left to say a word about myself. I need your prayers as much as you need mine. Brethren, pray for us."

In our own letter-writing we are apt to tell about ourselves first, apologizing for it, perhaps, at the close. But in St. Paul's correspondence we see:

*Love's beautiful postponement of self.*

Then, too, although he does say, "Pray for us," it is not after all for himself, but for the great work in which he is engaged. He no sooner remembers himself than he forgets himself: "Pray

for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Here we see:

*Love for self losing itself in care for its chosen object.*

It is as contributing to this that he asks them to pray that he "may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men"—men "that have no faith." Here we have:

*Lack of faith is that which makes men unreasonable and wicked in their treatment of those enthusiastically engaged in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus.*

Now comes a quick and happy turn from a merely negative deliverance to positive support and assurance of success: from men who cannot be relied on for help to One who can: "The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from evil"; or,

*Love's constant, ever-to-be-trusted care of its own.*

This love of God is that to which, above everything else, we need to have our hearts "directed," or (as the Greek of it is) "made to go"; to go, not in some round-about, dilatory way, but in a straight or direct way, indicating how liable we are to go to God's love—the truest, purest and surest of all—by the circuit either of lesser human loves or of some form or other of impatient, half-doubting legalism. In praying that their hearts may be "directed into the love of God and into

patient waiting for Christ," St. Paul shows us what is

*Love's most needed, most earnest prayer for those whom it would bless.*







## XXV

### THE EARLY MORNING OUTFIT OF PRAYER

*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord;  
in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee,  
and will look up. Ps. 5:3.*

Some one has said that "happiness consists in one's having more work that he wants to do, than he has time for doing it."

Something more than time, however, is needed—the knowing how to do the most and the best work in what time we have. This question I will try to answer.

Standing once by the immense granite quarry in Rockport, Cape Ann, and seeing how easily and constantly the steam-engine lifted the huge blocks from the quarry to the car, I said to the engineer, "This looks to me like too small an engine for so great a work; how do you manage it?"

"Well," he replied, "the man before me said he could not manage it, and so he was discharged."

"How is that?" I asked.

"This way," said he. "That man was in the habit of coming late to the power house, and of starting the engine before the steam was up to par pressure. Consequently, it was a drag to start with, and as he never could catch up, it was

a drag the whole day through. I am always here on time. I get the engine in full working order before I begin, and so, as you see, it does the work easily enough."

Just so with the day's work which any of us may have to do. All depends on getting the right start; getting ourselves in good working order before we begin—steam up and the machinery well oiled and ready for work.

Now, as to the work—we all have, or are likely to have, heavy loads to lift and carry before the day is done. Housekeepers understand this; understand it so well that I need not stop to explain, specify or enlarge. Fathers (and mothers, especially) understand this perfectly—the meals to get at the right time and of the right kind; the children's clothes to be made and kept in repair; their morals, manners, studies, companionships and recreations to be carefully looked after—for all of which the parents need a great deal of wisdom, strength and endurance, and patience without prescribing how much.

Business men, too, have their burdens of care, anxiety and much toil of brain, if not of the hand. How go through all this with uniform and quiet steadiness and without the wearing friction of fretfulness, worry or impatience?

The best preparation, as I think, is the early morning prayer; to begin the day by asking the blessing of God on our work, whatever the work may be, and then calmly committing ourselves,

our loved ones, our country and the world to His loving, wise and safe care and direction. So, so only, shall we be fully prepared to do well what it may come to us to do; to bear whatever it may come to us to bear—heavier tasks it may be, than we have looked for; it may be, sudden and wholly unexpected sorrow. The reserved strength which prayer gives takes us through the hardest as well as through the easiest of our toil and trial.

It was a large, early-morning congregation I once saw, although it was not a congregation of people, nor was it gathered in chapel, church or hall. It was an assembly of white, red and green lanterns on the long platform of an “L” railway station in New York. The lanterns had been widely scattered during the night—some doing low-track; some, platform; some, tower and pillar service—each at its own assigned post of duty. This meant naturally an inch-by-inch lowering of the oil-levels in the lamps, and this, such a constant though imperceptible lessening of their illuminating energy that they must all gather at their one common source of supply, to be there refilled before separating again to their several posts of service.

We go forth, morning by morning, as full of good intentions as the signaling lamps are of oil; with a fixed determination to answer cheerfully every call of duty; to stand in our respective places as sentinel examples of Christ-like living. Then comes the gradually depleting time. The

fret of home cares, the anxieties of business, provocation to wrong feeling, speech and act, social dissipation of serious thought, make silent withdrawal from our stock of grace. Our lamps grow dim and must be refilled and retrimmed if we would have them continue to bless those to whom we are set to guide, warn and cheer.

The promise is explicit, that those who wait upon God in prayer shall renew their strength. Of those who do thus wait upon Him some walk without fainting, and some are not weary, even though they run. We may even get wings. Some do.

## XXVI

### GIFTS FOR GAIN

*Occupy, till I come.* Luke 19:13.

*Neglect not the gift that is in thee..* I Tim. 4:14.

"Occupy"; or, Anglicizing the Greek, "Pragmatize with the talents I give you, till I come." True, a single talent is a little sum, but for a start in "pragmatism," it is enough—enough, that is, for the obedient and faithful servant—enough wherewith to insure from the Lord of the talents not only a welcoming "well-done," but promotion to rulership over great "cities."

With what silent compulsion of beautiful and yet serious example do we see the command and the implied promise borne in upon us by all growing things about us; by growing things of the garden, conservatory, orchard, field and forest. A garden-seed, a flower-bulb, a grain-kernel, a beech-nut, an acorn—what little things they are; yet to each has been given a hidden potency of beauty or of fruitfulness for the support and joy of our human lives. To each comes the command, "Stir up the gift of God that is in you." And what is the response? "Lord, it was a little seed, but as return for that little gift, I bring back to you the 'gain' of this lily, of this wheat-harvest, the fruit of this orchard, the elms, oaks and sequoias of this forest." And with what thankfulness of men are they all received and enjoyed,

and with what a smile of benediction from the approving Lord!

“Freely ye have received.” If I may be allowed the “free coinage” of a convenient word, I would say that *donability*, or the ability to give, is always conditioned upon *susceptibility*, which, looking at its root-meaning, we see to be simply the ability to take.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said to a friend: “Come with me out to my farm, and I will show you what a tree can do when you give it a chance!” And what was the secret of that grand old evergreen’s magnificent success but that it had kept on steadily enlarging year by year its susceptibility, or taking power, until at length there was as much of a tree below ground as there was above, and until the aggregate of its leaf-surface is reckoned no longer by square yards, but by square roods?

Our orchards, vineyards and grain-fields—why do they find themselves in the condition they are to make their yearly contributions to the world’s need but that they have been as quick to seek and as free to take as they are now ready and generous to give? What have their restless rootlets been but so many busy fingers spread out in all directions to feel after and find whatever the friendly soil has been free to furnish? And what have the leaves been but so many beseeching and eager palms extended to welcome the help which



has been offered them in the air and in the summer's sunshine and showers? Vines and trees are generous givers only because, first, they have faithfully kept themselves in constant touch with their own proper sources of supply; because, second, they have been diligent to improve this opportunity of contact by receiving and appropriating the provision offered; and because, third, they have been careful to enlarge their power of appropriation to meet their continually growing needs.

Why is it that some Christians we see are branches clustered always with spiritual fruit, ready always with their cheerful gifts of time, thought, prayer, sympathy, money, as opportunities arise or fit occasions are presented? For the like three reasons, and for these only—because they keep themselves by an unwavering trust in closest union with Christ, the true Vine; because mind and heart are thus kept uninterruptedly open to receive the life He is ever waiting to impart, and because along with these is a constantly growing susceptibility welcoming the larger and yet larger gifts of His inflowing love.

## XXVII

### GOOD CHEER FOR DARKEST HOURS

*Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me. Acts 27: 25.*

The ship on which Paul is being taken as a prisoner to Rome is a merchantman carrying a cargo of grain from Egypt. There are on board of her two hundred and seventy-six persons: the ship-master and crew, the owner or supercargo, some passengers from Cesarea, a military company with Julius their captain and some state prisoners, whom he is taking to Rome. Among these prisoners is Paul, accompanied by two of his most faithful friends, Aristarchus of Macedonia and Luke, who is both physician and evangelist.

The difficulties of navigating the Mediterranean were the same two thousand years ago as they are to-day. "If the difference between ancient ships and our own is borne in mind, the problems of that early seamanship are reduced nearly to those with which the modern navigator has to contend in the same waters."

Owing to contrary winds it was with difficulty that the vessel had made Fair Havens, a road-stead on the southern shore of the island of Crete. It was then about the first of October, the season of the year beyond which it was "im-

prudent to try the open sea, and the exact time when seafaring was pronounced to be dangerous by both Greek and Roman writers." It became, therefore, a matter for serious consideration and consultation whether to remain at Fair Havens for the winter or to seek some better harbor. Paul's advice is that they should remain. He warns the Centurion, Julius, that should he continue the voyage at that time, it would be not only with great injury to the cargo and ship, but with great risk of their lives. The captain and supercargo take a different view of the matter and advise to continue the voyage. As they have a greater personal interest in the safety of the ship and cargo, and are besides experienced seamen, the Centurion, naturally enough perhaps, takes their advice; the more readily because their opinion is approved by a majority of those on board. As soon, therefore, as a fair wind springs up they set sail, hoping to reach Phenice on the western coast of the same island, a more commodious harbor and a better wintering place.

"The sailors," says Howson, "already see the high land of the coast and are proceeding in high spirits, fair-weather sails set and boat towing astern, forgetful of past difficulties and blind to impending dangers, when an alarming change comes over their fortunes without a moment's warning. While pursuing their course in full confidence close by the shore of Crete, a violent wind with all the appearance of a hurricane comes

down from the mountains and strikes the ship with such violence that the pilot can no longer keep her to her course. They are blown off from the island and compelled to scud before the gale. In order to make sure of sea-room and at the same time drift to the westward, the ship is laid to. They strike sail, hoist the boat on board, undergird the hull with cables and lighten the ship by throwing all the spare tackling into the sea." Hopeless wreck stares them in the face.

It has been all the harder to bear the calamity which has come upon them, for the reason that they had been kindly warned against it. Paul, as we have seen, had earnestly admonished Julius that after the "fast," sailing was dangerous, and that they had better wait at Fair Havens for fairer weather. It was natural, perhaps, that the Centurion should believe the supercargo and the captain more than the things which were spoken by a man like Paul, who is only a religious teacher, and but one of a squad of prisoners whom the Centurion is conducting for trial to Rome. He soon finds, however, that a minister of the Gospel, and a prisoner at that, may possibly know something worth attending to, even about business. It is not long before the ship begins to be knocked about by an insolent and loud-mouthed sea, that pays no sort of respect to the dignity of even an imperial Captain. Just as the apostle had foreseen, "Euroclydon," that surly giant of the Adriatic, falls into one of his wrathful, peri-

odic fits and is now mercilessly buffeting the unwary vessel. Here is a good chance for Paul to take his revenge. The taunt would have been in order, "I gave you fair warning; you have run into this trouble with your eyes open, and now you must get out of it the best way you can." But Paul is of a different spirit; higher, purer, nobler. True, he does say, "Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me and not have loosed from Crete and to have gained this harm and loss." But this is no ugly, "I told you so." Paul does not sulk and throw up the whole business simply because his own advice was not taken. He has no small pride that must be apologized to, before he will volunteer to help. He frankly accepts the situation and in a thoroughly manly way applies himself to the bettering of it. Instead of still further weakening his shipmates by selfish reproaches, he strengthens them with words of cheer. If he does call to the Centurion's mind the mistake in not listening to his counsel, it is not to make capital out of it for his own distinction, but only that his comrades may the more easily rise above the mistake by seeing how heartily he can himself forgive it and how thoroughly he can forget it: "One glance only at the mistake made and the harm done; now let it go, and let us do what we can to better the present and brighten the future"—such is the noble, Christ-like spirit of the apostle's talk.

And that they may not look on all this as the

cheap exhortation of a lucky weather-prophet, Paul lets them into a great secret of his—a report he has received from the only infallible signal-service Authority, that they shall weather the storm; that the ship will be lost, but not a single life. With entire self-renunciation, and with the beautiful candor of humility, he gives all the credit of his confidence and courage where it justly belongs: “For there stood by me, this night, the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, Sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

Paul believes two things: first, that God had through a special messenger sent him a promise of deliverance, and, second, that what God had thus promised He would certainly perform. In the midst of the darkness and danger which surrounds him this two-fold confidence makes Paul calm, cheerful and courageous.

As we ourselves make the voyage of life, we are liable, every one of us, to be overtaken by storms as sudden and as violent as that which came down on that ill-fated ship. Losses, bereavements, oppositions, sicknesses, calumnies, may smite us and drive us far out of the course which we had marked out for our passage. And this may come to the best of men; to God’s own and dearest child.



"True," says one, "yet a way may be found to bear uncomplainingly all such merely temporal afflictions as loss of property, position, popular esteem; of health and of friends even, knowing that these losses may somehow issue in a more than equivalent spiritual gain; that a wholesome check to our rebellious complainings may be found in the words of the blind, bewailing Hebrew 'Agonistes':

'But peace! I must not quarrel with the will  
Of highest dispensation which herein  
Haply hath ends above my reach to know,'

but what of that deepest trouble of all; trouble which comes to us, not as trouble came to the shipwrecked sailors simply through an error of practical judgment, but through the dark forebodings of a guilty and awakened conscience—sins committed by us against warnings and counsels of the dearest and wisest of friends; against the gentle but earnest dissuasions of the heavenly monitor within"?

Yes, trouble, indeed! "Fortune lost"; do you say? "Health gone? Friends removed or estranged?" Not one of these, nor all of them together, are worthy to be named in the comparison. These earthly sorrows are but the shore-shallows of the mind. Would you know where the deep-sea soundings are? Cast your lead into the depths of a soul sorrowing over its remembered sins. Know by sad experience what it



means to be tossed up and down in that Adria of anguish, where neither sun or star in many days appears; when no small tempest beats on the soul, and when all hope that it will be saved is taken away.

In such an hour as that, it will help us, if we recall the darkness, the helplessness, the despair in which that ship of Alexandria was reeling and pitching in the merciless, mad waves of the Adriatic—officers, prisoners, passengers and crew, all at both their wits' end and their hopes' end—"all" hope that they would be saved taken away. Yet, just when they deem that they draw near to death, a light breaks forth in their very midst; a light which banishes fear and inspires courage; a light kindled by an invisible spark from the heavens; a message of love, a promise of deliverance direct from God.

So when tempest-tossed by reason of our sins, reeling under the blows of an accusing conscience, enveloped in the gloomy mantle of shame, terrified by the thunders of violated law, ready to despair of ever attaining to eternal life; even in that night of the soul a light shines forth; a voice of cheer comes to us; the light not shining visibly; the voice not speaking audibly from the skies, but none the less a light and a voice from God, shining and speaking to us from His holy Word; a message of love, of mercy, of deliverance; assuring us that the God with whom we have to do is merciful and gracious, that he passes

by iniquity, transgression and sin; that he does not take advantage of our iniquities to mark them against us; that from our worst mistakes, errors and follies He turns away just so soon as we turn away from them to Him; and that He then not only "takes the sting out of the remembrance of our wrong-doing," but that He makes use of our failures and our faults only as the dark cloud in which to set His bright bow of pardon, of promise, of hope, of eternal life.

## XXVIII

### THE BROKEN HEART

*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit.*  
Ps. 34: 18.

When we telephone a message which is to be sent by telegraph, if it be a specially important message, we repeat it to the telegraph operator and have him repeat it to us.

God had an important message for Pharaoh. It came to Pharaoh in two dreams: one, about the well-favored and the ill-favored kine; the other, about the full and the empty ears. Yet, when Joseph was called to interpret them, he told Pharaoh that the dreams were one, because, although so unlike in form, they were alike in meaning. They were parallel dreams.

We have a like parallelism in the text. To be of a "contrite spirit" is the same as to be of a "broken heart"; and "having God nigh to us" is but another way of saying what it is to be "saved." The message is repeated for the same reason that the dream was doubled to Pharaoh: to make assurance doubly sure that it is a thing unalterably established by God. The dream was given to Pharaoh to save the life of the body only; the text is given to us for the saving of the soul.

But we have a Book-parallelism as well as a verse-parallelism—the teaching of the New Tes-

tament being in exact accord with the teaching of the Old. Jesus gives the indispensableness of humility in order to salvation the very first place in His list of beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Do you think," asks an apostle, "do you think that the Scripture saith in vain that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble?" And, "humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time," is but another parallelism to my text.

"But what does this mean," you ask; "what is it to be of a broken heart and a contrite spirit?"

"Breaking" means—yielding to pressure. There comes a heavy snow-fall; the roof yields to the pressure and is broken in. A tornado—a too violent wind pressure—and the steeple rocks, topples and falls. The mine-owner robs the pillars of coal left to prop the roof of the mine. At length they begin to "crawl out" at the foot, the hill settles and buries the unfortunate miners. In all such cases there is resistance up to a certain point; then the stay yields. It may be broken in a few pieces—in "two" only, perhaps—or, as with the pillar of coal, it may be broken into a great many—"broken all to pieces," as we say. Then it is "contrite," for to be contrite means to be crushed; to be broken all to pieces. In either case, the meaning is the same—a *ceasing utterly to resist*.

The text speaks of a heart that is broken ; of a spirit that is contrite ; and the assurance is given that God is nigh to such a heart ; that such a spirit He saves.

But why break any man's heart ; why wish that any one's spirit should be crushed ? What is there in the spirit of any man, woman or child that God must see it crushed before He can draw nigh to it and save it ?

Is not this the exact opposite to what we would naturally expect ? Is it not contrary to the very first principle of all true architecture ? What does your trained civil engineer do but make the most careful study of the strength of the materials he is to use, so as to make sure that the pillar, the beam, the arch, the bridge, be *not* broken ? How much pressure it will bear *without* breaking ? A careless estimate, and you have the crowded platform at a public gathering give away ; you have the Ashtabula-bridge horror ; you have the collapse of the New York Orchard Street houses. Instead of weakening, breaking, crushing, or tearing down, does not the honest and wise builder stiffen and strengthen, and so build that the building will stand and never give way and fall ?

Is it not this, too, what we seek in character building, for ourselves, our children, our fellow-men ? Do we not study how much their disposition, temper, patience, moral fibre, will bear ? Are we not careful, and *ought* we not to be careful, not to subject them to too great a strain ?

“What is a broken-spirited man, woman or child good for?” we ask. Is he not a misery to himself, a burden to his friends, and the pity of the world? And is it not cruel, is it not a shame, is it not a crime, to break down the spirit of your child, of your friend, of your neighbor? Must not that be a mistaken kind of religion that would break us down and so make weaklings of us all?

The answer is that there are in us all both good and evil, and that it is the evil and the evil only that God wants to have broken down and destroyed. Whatever is good, pure, right and praiseworthy in any one, that He desires to have strengthened and by all means to be built up; built up so firmly and securely as to stand, and stand forever.

To make this clear, suppose of a boy that he has pleasing qualities of person and of mind; that he is beautiful in feature and form; that he is bright, intelligent and in many respects amiable; but that he is wilful, headstrong, disrespectful, disobedient; that he declares by his actions, if not by his words, that he will not be ruled by his father; that he will do just as he pleases, whether it pleases his father or not. Now that obstinate, rebellious spirit spoils everything, and will so long as it is held to. That stubbornness, you say, he must in some way be made to give up; that proud, defiant, disobedient spirit must be broken. It must, or the boy is ruined. So long as that disposition remains, there cannot be—how



can there be?—happy intercourse between his father and him? Some things are impossible, and this is one of them. It is a moral impossibility for the father to draw nigh to such a child in an approving way until that wayward, unfilial, undutiful, insubmissive spirit be given up. By that spirit the child puts up an effectual bar between himself and his father. Any excellencies he may have cannot make up for this radical wrong. He may be quick in apprehension, versatile in talent, diligent in study, even brilliant in genius. His intercourse with his companions may be honorable and courteous. Outside of the home circle, his conduct may be without reproach. The neighbors, who do not know what his home-conduct is, may all speak well of him. But for the father, who does know it all, *that* makes the matter worse rather than better. Nothing of all that satisfies the yearning he feels for his child's confidence and love. The father is glad of every good endowment his child has and of every good acquirement. It is not these that he would have lessened in the least. Not his comeliness of person, not his quick and retentive memory, not his vivacity and mirthfulness, not even his strength of will—nothing in him that is good, honorable, excellent and praiseworthy does the father wish to have interfered with or damaged; only that which is an evil and a curse, only that which carries in it the seeds of shame, disgrace, unhappiness and ruin to the child himself. But the last vestige



of every such thing in the boy, the father does want broken and done away with forever. If you are a wise and faithful father, you will leave no means untried to save your child from so terrible a ruin. You will bring such pressure of appeal to bear on his heart and conscience as, if anything can, will cause him to yield; and you will continue to press these appeals until that unfilial obstinacy be given up.

Just that and nothing more does God desire to have broken and crushed in any man's heart. The undutiful, disobedient child of God indulges towards God, his Heavenly Father, a spirit which, if he be himself a father, he cannot at all put up with in his own child toward himself. He does exactly what pleases himself, not asking and not caring much to know whether it pleases *God* or not. What God bids him to do he refuses to do, unless it happen to fall in with his own inclinations. What God forbids, that, if it suits him, he does not scruple or hesitate to do; the bitter enormity, the heaven-and-earth astonishing crime of which God complains: "Hear, O heavens and be astonished, O earth; I have nourished and brought up *children* and they have *rebelled* against me." "If I be a father, where is my honor?" God has no fault to find with anything else. He grudges no unconverted, prayerless man any intellectual gifts he may have, be it breadth of culture, refinement of taste, grace of manner, felicity of speech, success in business,

any accumulation of honest wealth. God is glad to see any man's barns filled with plenty, to see his table bountifully spread, to see him happy in the society of many friends. Is it not He that gives friends, health, talent, riches, honor? Who makes His sun to shine on the evil, and sends rain on even the unjust? But how can He take pleasure in those whom He thus blesses and benefits so long as they maintain towards Him an attitude of unthankfulness and insubmission? How *can* He draw to them and save them? This unthankful, unfilial, disobedient spirit must be given up, and the moment it *is* given up there is loving communion between father and son. Then the returning wanderer is given the ring, the shoes, the robe and the feast, and then is there joy even among the angels of God.

Consider, now, the pressure that God brings to bear on the impenitent and self-willed to cause them to yield. There is the pressure of fear. The one thing most to be dreaded in this world or in any world is, knowing what is right, either not to do it, or to do what is wrong:—

“What conscience dictates to be done,  
Or warns me not to do;  
*This* give more than hell to shun,  
*That* more than heaven pursue.”

As it would be both weak and wrong in God to surrender his right to our obedient love, He

warns those who would contend with Him against so unequal a strife—unequal, because, on our part, so unjust.

But there is another and mightier appeal—an appeal to hope, to gratitude, to love. God takes away all excuse for continuing the contest by the gracious offer of the free, full and immediate forgiveness of all past wrong-doing, and of a complete and joyous restoration to all the privileges of loyal subjects and dutiful sons. And does not a heart need to be broken which resists both the fear that drives and the love which draws?

The giving up of this enmity and the thankful acceptance of the offer of pardon and eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ—taking our proper place again as obedient children in the family and as loyal subjects under the government of God—this is to be of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

1. That we may avoid being mistaken in so important a matter, it is to be carefully considered that one may be broken handed without being broken hearted. Although utterly broken handed, Napoleon on St. Helena is not at all broken hearted. Though now powerless, he is none the less proud. He refuses to take defeat as a lesson in humility. "My soul," he says, "is marble; calamity has no more effect upon it than oil poured upon a rock." In spirit he fights

against the providence which dooms him thus to life-long exile from the scenes of his former glory. He shows no relenting for lives sacrificed, homes made desolate, conjugal vows violated. His dying words, "The head of the army," show that, to the very last, his thoughts are still on conquest, on dominion, on a war-lord's renown.

2. It should, again, be noted that to be broken-hearted is not, by any means, to be down-hearted. It is not to give up hope, courage, enterprise and energy in the affairs of this world. Some there are who have met with ill-fortune; who, for one reason or another, have failed of success; who have been beaten back as fast as by much painstaking effort they had gotten onward; who have lost property, credit, position, friends. They struggled bravely for a time, but they have at length become discouraged. They no longer have ambition; have ceased trying to retrieve their affairs. They have lost heart and hope. They are dejected. What is worse still, they may have become bitter, misanthropic and morose.

Such persons are *dispirited*, but they are not contrite in spirit; they are down-hearted, but they are not broken-hearted. Misfortune has not led them back to God, to find in Him a Father who chastens only because He loves.

3. And, once more, to be broken-hearted is more than it is simply to *bend* under the pressure of divine truth. Many there are who bend, but

do not break. They have what is likely to prove a fatal quickness in assenting to even the most faithful preaching of the Word of God; examples of "deadening familiarity" with duty acknowledged, but not done; self-complacent in the use of merely the words and the attitudes of worship.

What is needed in the case of such persons is a full and honest acceptance of the naked truth of things; an unreserved acknowledgment as true, of all the facts of their past lives; a frank confession of their need and of their duty as set forth in the Word of God. Our real manhood and our safety for this world and the next depend on our looking the facts of our lives—and it is only with facts that God deals—dark, dreadful, humiliating as they may be—squarely, steadily, unflinchingly in the face. We must not bend. Standing bolt upright, full-fronting God's stern truth, let the confession and the submission be quick and full: "What is so, Father, is so, and I have nothing to say."

This ends the controversy. No concealment, no prevarication, no evasion, no rebellious and deceitful postponement of an immediate duty.

Why do not all who are convinced of their sins and sinfulness do this? Because, when thus convinced, our first instinct is to put out our hands for support. We do not like to fall. We crave sympathy in our distress; the distress of hard pressed but, as yet, unbroken hearts. The desire for such sympathy is unwholesome, unmanly

and is really insincere. Such sympathy, could we have it from never so many friends, would be vain and unrelieving. What we need is **not sympathy** in our sin, but sympathy and help in an honest purpose to confess and forsake it—sympathy, not in any attempt to escape our duty, but in a dead-in-earnest determination to do it. What we are to do is not to “fawn around the cross,” but resolutely to take the cross and bear it after Jesus. The moment we do this, what an untold wealth of the richest, tenderest sympathy awaits us! How the heart of Jesus warms toward us! How angel-bands bend lovingly toward us and beckon! How Christian friends, how the church of Christ below and above welcome us! Then is God indeed nigh to us; then does He save us with an everlasting salvation.



## XXIX

### TENACITY OF CHRISTIAN PURPOSE

*Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto.* Rom. 1:13.

We call a uniform way of acting a law—a natural law, if it be a natural force that so acts. “Directly as the mass and inversely as the square of the distance” is gravity’s way of acting. It is not a whim, a caprice, acting one way at one time but another way at another. It is something that can be relied on with no fear of failure. It is as strong and as persevering now as it was a thousand or ten thousand years ago. It does not grow weary by waiting. Hindered it may be for a time, yet it bates not one jot of either its purpose or its power. It does not cease to act because balked awhile in its aim. Hold a stone in the air for a hundred days. It does not fall; but why? Because it is “let hitherto” by the counter-working force of a human will. But, although not drawn to the ground it is, none the less, *drawn*. And this tireless force out-tires the strongest arm. And why this? Because there is in it the unlesened might of Omnipotence working against an obstacle of limited and diminishing resistance. Reaching up its unseen fingers it is, even now in this midsummer day, pulling at every leaf on every tree. It is “let” for a little, but its triumph



is sure. A few more days, and it will strew the ground with its autumn spoils. It is not daunted by the pyramids even, but will one day bring them down, mingling their sand with the sands of the desert.

There is a law of the summer. Be it that the spring is backward and discouraging. All the same the summer comes. The very latest of the leaves escape, at length, from their prison-cells. And when they come, it is with this salutation: "We would not have you ignorant that oftentimes we purposed to come to you, but were let hitherto."

There is a law of Christian purpose; of a purpose inspired, energized, directed and governed by love to the Lord Jesus Christ, His people and His cause. We are as morally certain what a man so purposing will do under given circumstances as we are naturally certain what, under given circumstances, a natural force will do. Whatever may be the hindrances to its success, it still works with a determination that is never spent and that never tires.

St. Paul serves as a striking illustration. Although he has made three missionary journeys, he has never yet visited Rome. Such aloofness might, not uncharitably, perhaps, be taken as intended neglect; not only because the Roman Church, made up largely as it is of Gentile converts, calls for his personal supervision; but because, also, it is a much more important church

than are most of the churches which he has himself gathered. It has come to be widely known for its Christian zeal and steadfastness. Its faith is spoken of "throughout the whole world." The apostle, besides, has a personal acquaintance with many of its members, as shown by the many salutations at the close of the epistle.

That he has not long since visited these beloved brethren who have stood so faithfully for Christ in the foremost seat of officially-protected heathenism is, he assures them, from no lack on his own part of either interest or intention. He has a strong desire to see them. It is a desire which, for years past, he has warmly cherished. It has, indeed, been more than a desire; it has been a fixed purpose. Again and again he has fully determined to make this visit; has set a time, over and over, for his coming, but, each time something has prevented him. So, although no apology is needed yet, as he would not have his detention construed as indifference, he does make ample explanation: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed coming to you, but was let, hitherto."

As proof of the earnest sincerity of this purpose, "Pray with and for me," he adds, "that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of them, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

The appeal to God finds an unlooked-for answer in the "appeal to Caesar." Planned and "personally" conducted for him by his bitterest enemies, the journey which the Apostle has so long and so ardently wished and prayed that he might take, brings him at length to that welcoming escort of brethren from Rome which at Appii Forum causes him to "thank God and take courage." The long hindered purpose, made invincible by prayer, is now happily fulfilled.

### XXX

#### GIVING CONSCIENCE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

*But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Rom. 14: 23.*

Some one has said and said truly, as I think, that every man's first duty in life is to preserve the peace of his own mind; that he can do this only by keeping on good terms with his own conscience, and that an uneasy conscience will disturb a man's peace more than will any form of merely outward affliction; more than would the loss of health, property, position or friends. If, then we would have this "New-year" to be for us a really "happy" one, our first care must be to do nothing which we either know, or believe, to be wrong.

Now, I have no hesitation in saying that there is not one of us here, this morning, but intends to be careful in just that way. We are all going to keep ourselves so well in hand as not to do anything wrong; nothing very wrong, I mean; nothing positively, absolutely wrong; nothing which we know our consciences would condemn us for having done. Not one of us is in the least afraid of being haled before the district judge, or of in any way justly forfeiting the good opinion of either society or of our friends. Our danger, if

danger there be, will lie in the temptation to do things which we fear are not exactly right, but which we hope are not exactly wrong; things which make us debate with ourselves whether we ought to do them or not. Finding ourselves distracted about them; pulled now this way and now that; we would be heartily glad if some one whom we could trust would decide the matter for us; one who would, at least, help us to decide and to decide rightly. For all such cases, I venture to propose this as a safe rule for us to follow: Until my course be perfectly clear, I will give my conscience (not inclination) the benefit of the doubt.

Take, by way of illustration, so simple a matter as that of eating and drinking; something which we all not only have to do, but which we enjoy doing; but for the very reason that we enjoy doing it and in proportion as we enjoy it, something which we are in constant danger of overdoing. It may not be true of everybody, but for very many of us it would be worth a good deal to know, if we could, two things: First just what it would be best for us to eat and drink; but even more than that, how much at each of the thousand and odd meals of the year, it would be best for us to take. Many persons have little idea of how much this would mean to them, to how great a degree health depends upon it, and, with health, temper, disposition and ability to do our best work in the best way. Quite recently, one of our most honored and most useful citizens told me of

the care he had found it indispensable for him to take about his diet; and especially about the matter of over-eating. A still more striking example is this. I was once an inmate of a home where the honored president of one of our New England colleges was sometimes a guest. On all such occasions he brought to the table a pair of little scales to weigh whatever he ate. Yes, I know—you smile; a smile of amusement; perhaps of derision; and I know what you are ready to say: “Oh, he was one of your confirmed dyspeptics.” True enough, he was; but now had he become so, is the question.

A greatly esteemed physician once told me that he avoided over-indulgence by always rising from the table with as good an appetite as he sat down with—too hard a rule, I am sure, for the average man or woman to follow; certainly so for the average child.

A celebrated divine once gave this warning to his friends: “Bring your hour-glass with you to the table. Set it down by your plate. See how long you are in enjoying the over-luxurious banquet; then turn the glass and see how long you are in suffering from it.” This is a clever enough epigram, but it is hardly a safe rule, for the reason that the enjoyment is present, known, and sure, while the suffering is remote and somewhat uncertain.

The best rule I know of was once given to some of us college boys, at Williams” by our wise, re-



vered, and much-loved professor, Albert Hopkins. It is this: "The moment you begin to doubt whether you have eaten enough or not, is the time to stop." This is the Scriptural rule, he said; and in confirmation of it he quoted what St. Paul says about this very matter of eating: "Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. He that doubteth is condemned, if he eat, because he eateth not in faith; for whatsoever is not of faith (that you are not clear about) is sin."

We shall, I am sure, be saved from a good deal of unhappiness during the year on which we are now entered, if we are careful to apply this same test, not only to this, but to all other instances of questionable behavior—to things which we shall be tempted to do, but things which we shall hesitate about doing, saying or writing because not fully persuaded in our minds that it would be right for us to do them. It may be doubtful ways of spending time or money; doubtful ways of doing business; doubtful places and forms of pleasure or amusement; doubtful ways of spending the Sabbath. All such questions we must consider with ourselves honestly and conscientiously. There are so many ways of cheating, or trying to "cheat, an uncomfortable conscience," that we are often reluctant even to consider the possibility that we may be wrong. Giving conscience the benefit of the doubt until sure that we are right, will be the safe, and the only safe, course for us to take.



Nothing will help us, in such cases, so much as prayer. We believe in prayer, or we should not be here this morning. We have for our encouragement this special promise of answers to such prayers: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."

So praying and so doing, at the close of the year (or, should we not live to see it, then at the close of our life) "our rejoicing will be this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation," both with ourselves and "with the world."

## XXXI

### NUMBERING OUR DAYS

*So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Ps. 90:12.*

"I suppose you have your itinerary all mapped out, even to a day," I said to a friend about making a long tour abroad.

"No," he replied, "that would spoil it all for me. I do not tie myself down as to either places or times. I shall go and stay, and go and stay again, as the mood takes me."

That, though, is something most tourists cannot do. There is a limit to the number of days they will have at their command. The sailing-dates are fixed for both going and coming. It is not from choice but from necessity that, having cut it short, what they will take in and leave out, they "apply their hearts to the wisdom" of making the most they can of their sight-seeing days.

A young man decides on a professional career in life. Compared with its anticipated duration, his days of preparation are comparatively few. He numbers them easily enough; three years in fitting for college, four years in college, and three in the professional school. Allowing forty weeks of study to the year, on the use made of these four hundred weeks depends the good or the ill success of his whole life. The "wise" student counts carefully the weeks of each passing

term, not because they are so many but because they are so few; so almost nothing, indeed, compared with the many decades which he means to fill with useful and honorable work in the world. Gladstone is reported as having once punctuated the difference between the student who thus thoughtfully numbers his college-days and one who lets them slip by carelessly unimproved, by saying, "One-third of our Oxford and Cambridge men come only because they are sent; one-third come with no other idea than that of having a good time. The other third rules England!"

If it be worth while asking, "Where and how shall I spend these few, fleeting days of my earthly life?" how vastly more to the purpose must it be to ask, "Where and how shall I spend my eternity?" It is a short problem to reduce the traditional "three-score years and ten" to the twenty-five thousand five hundred and fifty days of which they are composed. True, they do seem so defined, to be a large sum. But the point to be considered is that it is, after all, a sum—a sum-total. Each day spent takes one from the number and brings us that much nearer the end. What, then, of even the longest lived of the antediluvian patriarchs? What of Methuselah, himself? Were we, too, to be multi-centenarians, how surely would come the hour when, looking back, we would be compelled to ask, "For what is our life?" and to answer, "Verily it is but a vapor which appeareth but a little while and then vanisheth away."

A weaver's shuttle, a shepherd's tent, the swift ships, the eagle hastening to its prey, the shadow that declineth, the fading flower, the withering grass, the ebbing tide, a tale that is told—yes, satire, sorrow and despair have exhausted the vocabulary of simile and metaphor to depict the swift passing of this our earthly life. Why "all vanity and vexation of spirit" but that it is all so brief?

Yet is the cynic's shaft blunted, grief comforted and despair chastened by Nature herself showing all who have eyes to see and ears to hear, how disproportionately vast is the good that follows the right improvement of even short periods of time. What gives the seed-time its superlative importance, but that it is so brief? Yet, promptly and faithfully improved, these few days insure support for the remaining three hundred and sixty-five. Numbering the days and applying both heart and hands to this kind of admonition, the "wise" husbandman plows in plowing time, in planting time, he plants, in harvest time, he reaps and gathers into barns.

What, then, of the life to come, the everlasting life? Of the world where time shall be no longer; from whose speech all our time-words are forever dropped; where is no reckoning of days, or years, or centuries, or milleniums; where is neither calendar or almanac marking the days of the week and month, the flow of the tides, the rising and setting of sun and moon? Here, seeking in

vain for some time-unit of measurement, the most profound student of numbers finds himself despairingly out-numbered. Be it, that he could number the dust-grains in the whole wide air, the drops of all the oceans, the leaves of all the forests—taken all together, they give no ground for intelligent comparison; they are not even the smallest fraction of eternity. In imagination we, now and then, try as time-engineers to survey that on-stretching road of the hereafter, but we tire at length of carrying our chain forward and driving and numbering our stakes. We pause, and at length we cease. The world and the life we have here entered is a world and a life without end.

Just here, however, we are confronted with the honest and anxious doubter to whom it seems most unreasonable and unjust that so momentous an issue, so vast a destiny, should be made to hang on the short, uncertain time allotted to us in this world. How can poor, weak, tempted and sinful mortals hope, by even the most faithful endeavor to pass examination for a world which only the righteous can enter? To the most strenuous, but unaided human effort, it were, indeed, impossible. Impossible, were our Examiner strict to mark our offences and implacable in His judgments. But since He is a compassionate, and merciful Father, a happy issue of life is possible for even those who have wandered furthest from the right, the safe path. For, what

is conversion? It is simply a "turning;" turning from the wrong road to the right one. *It is a matter, therefore, not of distance but of direction.* It is like the turn-table at a railroad station, the object of which is simply to change the direction of the train. Its length of a few yards only is as nothing compared with the breadth of the continent across which the train is to run. But short as it is, it determines the traveler's destination. God in His great mercy has provided in the Gospel of His Son the means and opportunity for such a change as will take us to our journey's end in peace. For making this change, a very little time is enough. True, there may be an unnecessarily long struggle with pride, self-will or unbelief before the one moment of final and happy decision. But the wickedest man may at any time, if he so wills, "forsake his way and the most unrighteous man his thoughts and may return to the Lord" who will then have mercy upon him and who will at once and abundantly forgive and blot forever all his sins. How long did it take Peter and Andrew, James and John to leave their nets; Matthew his "seat at the receipt of custom;" Zaccheus, to welcome Jesus as his guest; Saul, to look up and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

*So easy is it for us all to forget how quickly the years pass, that we cannot pray too earnestly, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."*



## XXXII

### SYSTEM AND SENTIMENT IN GIVING

*And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiab the priest found the book of the law of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. II Chron. 24: 14.*

The raising of money for religious uses was a thing well and wisely looked after in the old Levitical days and, with all our up-to-date progress, we have neither outgrown the need or outdone the method.

It was thoroughly systematic, to begin with. "It was a book of rates," as Henry says; "so much for a child over one month old and under five years; so much for those between five and twenty years; so much for those over sixty—the rich, according to their ability, and the poor according to theirs; something for those of either sex and of every age—the money that every man is set at."

It was not an open question whether the means for the support of public worship should be provided or not. A solid foundation was laid in undebatable requirement. At the same time provision was made for the free exercise of individual sentiment and choice; "All the money that cometh into any man's heart," or, as in the margin, "All the money that ascendeth upon the heart of a man." Here we have not only the strength of



method but the beauty of desire; the love of God overcoming the naturally gravitating power of gold, giving it buoyancy to ascend from the cold depths of the man's pocket upon the warmth of the man's heart so that, not by any penalizing compulsion but out of the fulness and freeness of his love, he brings his uncommanded gift into the Lord's house.

The pastor of probably the richest of all our great city churches once administered a wholesome and stinging rebuke to his congregation for the slipshod way in which the financial affairs of the church were being conducted—a chronic deficit (just then \$7,000.00 behindhand) which had always to be made up, if made up at all, by piteous appeals to individual members for supplementary subscriptions. Whence the trouble? From failure to make systematic provision for promptly meeting obligations which the church voluntarily assumes. Business is business. Properly conducted, there can be no church or missionary panic any more than, in case Wall-Street business be honestly conducted, there can be no Wall-Street panic. Shall the business men of a church keep to snug ways of managing their own concerns and at the same time let the Lord's business go haphazard at sixes and sevens? It may not be altogether easy, in every instance, to hit upon a plan which will work smoothly and acceptably to all; but, the harder the problem, the more cheerfully will love to the Master welcome

the privilege of solving it; trusting in Him for the wisdom necessary to solve it rightly.

From the building and repairing of the temple in the Old Testament to the widow's mite in the New comes the assurance of God's blessing on gifts laid freely on the altar of His love. Perhaps we have no more beautiful example than that of the good king, Josiah. He sought earnestly to God for wisdom. His prayer was answered by his being stirred up to repair the temple which a second time had fallen into decay: "Let the keepers of the temple-door deliver the money into the hands of the doers of the work that have the oversight of the Lord's house; and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house; unto carpenters and builders and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house."

How did God bless *that* undertaking? In the process of repairing, the lost "book of the Law" was found which "had been either neglected and mislaid carelessly or maliciously concealed;" and, as the result of finding and reading the book, a glorious revival of religion followed, to the spiritual improvement and uplifting joy of the nation.

Let money be now poured into the Lord's treasury for the support of all His workers in all His fields, at home and abroad, and He will make His Bible a new Bible and His truth new truth for ourselves, for our country, and for the world.

### XXXIII

#### THE GREATER OF TWO GREAT VICTORIES

*So the armed men left the captives and the spoil  
before the princes and the congregation.. II Chron.  
28: 14.*

The beautiful spirit of compassion shown toward the sufferers from earthquake and fire in Southern Italy, although justly set down to the credit of the teachings and example of Christ, was yet more than paralleled, some seven centuries before the Christian era, by what befell the people then living on the Eastern shore of the same great inland sea, whose Western shore was as lately the scene of such awful devastation.

The people of whom I speak had been attacked by the combined enemies of Syria and Israel. They had fought a double battle, had suffered a double defeat; and this two-fold defeat had been followed by a twofold deportation. The Syrian King had carried away a great multitude of the captives to Damascus. Israel smites Judah's King with a great slaughter, makes prisoners by the hundred thousand of men, women and children, robs them of their possessions and brings the spoil to Samaria—a far deeper sorrow than it would have been, had their belongings been swallowed up by an earthquake or destroyed by fire.

As these Samaritan conquerors, flushed with the joy of victory and exulting proudly over the downfall of their traditional enemies, draw near to their own royal city, they are, all at once, strangely interrupted in their advance. They find themselves confronted by a "prophet of the Lord." The column halts to see by what message this holy man of God dares silence the rejoicing of his victorious countrymen. It proves to be a message such as only a true prophet of God would have had the courage to deliver: "Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand, and you have slain them in a rage that reacheth up to heaven. And now you intend to *keep* under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you. But are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Now, hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again which you have taken of your brethren; for the fierce anger of the Lord is upon you."

A most timely rebuke and admonition, most graciously sent, most faithfully uttered, and most sensibly and wisely taken!

The program for a grand triumphal entry into Samaria is at once reversed—changed from any further humiliation of the despoiled and heart-broken captives to the subjecting of their own haughty and revengeful spirit to the purer and nobler dictates of humanity and mercy. The bat-

talions detailed to guard the prisoners give up their charge and "leave them and the spoil in the hands of the princes and of the whole concourse of the people." The appointing of a relief-committee is next in order. The men thus named enter promptly and heartily into the work: "They rise up and take the captives, and with the spoil clothe all that are naked among them, and give them to eat and to drink, and anoint them, and carry the feeble among them upon asses and bring them to Jericho." Then without more ado, they return to Samaria.

Great-minded, large-hearted Samaritans! An example for that later countryman of yours who, near that same "city of palm trees," rescued a half-dead traveler by the wayside—and, like him, worthy to be commemorated in the more than monumental pages of divine inspiration! And beside the honor, what increase of purest happiness for you! The beaming faces of these befriended prisoners, how much pleasanter a sight than the gleam of conquering ensigns; than the flash of victorious swords! These forlorn captives whose half-naked bodies you have clothed, whose bare and bleeding feet you have shod, whose hunger and thirst you have appeased, whose heads you did not forget to anoint (adding the courtesy of luxury to the promptings of humanity); the sick and feeble whom you tenderly carried—yes, this defeated, dejected, despairing band of exiles whom, thus generously cared for, you have

restored to their former condition and helped to re-establish in their dear old homes—how much more their tears of happy and loving thankfulness are worth to you than would or could have been their enforced toil in what would have been to them your most sad and homesick service! How much sweeter than the clangor of boasting trumpets is to you the music of mercy's gentle voice; and, with it, the grateful breathings of answering hearts calling down by prayer on you, your children and your nation, the richest blessings of heaven!

How incalculably greater was that of the two great victories then and there won. Nature—are we, at times, tempted, bitterly tempted, to call her cruel? Yet, in even her most awful visitations there come calculable pauses. But *human* Nature—to what unforeseen, unimagined extremes of cruelty will *it* go, once are let loose the unrestrained passions of pride, jealousy, ambition or revenge! Our depraved humanity may well learn the lesson of humility from the devastating convulsions of Nature. Not only has the loss of life and treasure occasioned by her outbreaks of violence been really insignificant compared with the sweeping desolations of war, but never is it hers, as it is not seldom the infamy of war, to add gratuitous insult to the suffering caused by her plagues, earthquakes, fires or floods.



## XXXIV

### GRATIFICATION AND GRATITUDE

*Bless the Lord . . . and forget not all his benefits.* Ps. 103: 2.

Literally translated, the word "benefit" means "good" of some sort "done" to the person on whom the benefit is bestowed.

But (a step further) to do one good means to contribute in some way to that one's pleasure, happiness or advantage. It is because we both enjoy and are nourished by it, that we pronounce "good" the food of which we daily partake. We say of a well played or well sung piece, of an excellent picture, of a beautiful landscape, of a fine poem, "They are good," by which is meant simply that in these things we find a measure of gratification. And, in general, whoever calls into exercise any susceptibility we may have of true and rational enjoyment does us a good; confers on us a "benefit."

Whoever, again, does us an intended good shows by so doing that he feels kindly toward us. Otherwise, why seek to gratify or aid us? A benefit, then, is a sure token of both interest and affection. A good act is a kind act. Back of the good done is some one's good-will.

In such "good-will" there is more, incomparably more, than there is in the gift itself. There was more in the beautiful seal sent to



Goethe, the idea of which was conceived by the then young Carlyle and the design of which (the serpent of eternity encircling a star, with the legend "Unhasting, Unresting") was sketched by Mrs. Carlyle—there was vastly more in the seal than in the seal itself—"A memorial," as the givers wrote, "of the gratitude we owe you, and which we think the whole world owes you."

And, as there is more in the gift than the gift, so in the thanks for the gift is there more than the thanks.

What follows, then? This, that the receiving of a benefit excites, or should excite, in the recipient, a feeling quite distinct from, and far above, that which comes from any advantage or enjoyment from the good itself. Coming home, of an evening, you find awaiting you a gift of which you had not beforehand had either knowledge or expectation. Naturally, your first thought is about the gift—what a help, comfort or pleasure it will be to you. But you do not dwell long on that thought alone. You come upon the name of the giver, and now the gift speaks not alone, or chiefly, to the supplied need or gratified taste; it now comes as an appeal to your heart; a challenge to your love; and this makes the offering dear to you far beyond its power of imparting to you any gratification whatever. You might have gotten the self-same thing by purchase, but with what a different feeling would you then have regarded it! The seller you may not love; the giver, you do.

*Thus good, as the expression of good-will, accomplishes its truest and best end, only when it begets good-will, in turn.* The gratification ends in utter selfishness unless it awakens gratitude.

This statement we find beautifully illustrated, and confirmed by noticing that these two words, "gratification" and "gratitude" have precisely the same root; a word, namely, which means kindness, or good-will. This not only makes them lie very near to one another on the same page of the dictionary, but it points with delightful significance to the fact that they are joined lovingly together on the same leaf of the rightfully interpreting heart.

This, too, gives answer to the question which a Christian friend once asked earnestly of me, "How is it that we can bless God? He blesses us, we know, by giving us no end of things which we not only need, but which we could not possibly do without. But how can we bless Him since He can easily enough dispense with even the best and costliest of our gifts?" In precisely the same sense, is the answer, although in a different way. The spirit of blessing is the same in both; kindness, good-will, affection. God blesses us by His good gifts; we bless Him by the loving acknowledgment of His loving acts.

Gifts, however beautiful or costly, are but shadows, and like shadows they pass away. Is the gift a gem? It may be crushed, stolen or lost. Is it a more brilliant gem of speech? Crystallized

## GRATIFICATION AND GRATITUDE 151

in words of whatever tongue, yet all tongues shall cease. Is knowledge the gem? It shall vanish away. The love, of which the gift is but the momentary expression, "abides."

## XXXV

### INTERCESSION FOR THE ILL-DESERVING

*And Abraham stood yet before the Lord. Gen.  
18: 22.*

There was no very urgent reason, as men would say, why Abraham should interest himself particularly in the fate of Sodom, or even of his nephew who lived there. Were not the people of Sodom "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly"? Was not that city a plague-spot on God's fair earth, corrupted and corrupting, poisoned and poisoning, and would it not be every way better that such a sink of iniquity be cleansed by the potent disinfection of brimstone and fire? And as for Lot, did he not, in utter disregard of what was due to the age and prior claim of his uncle, and taking mean advantage of his uncle's generosity, did he not choose the fertile valley of the Jordan for his own pasture-grounds and deliberately pitch his tent toward Sodom? And did he not, after that he had become thoroughly acquainted with the pollutions of the town, did he not take his family there and make it his chosen residence? And would it not, then, have been a fitting recompense had his injured uncle left him to shift for himself as best he could in the coming overthrow?

That would indeed have been the way of the

world—the spirit which leads the man who has attained all of rank, power and wealth which he desires, to leave his fellows to struggle alone with their temptations, hardships and dangers, and to excuse their own neglect by the heartless old plea, “Am I my brother’s keeper? Things must take their course. It is no more than right that he suffer the consequence of his folly.”

Abraham does better. His own affairs are indeed satisfactorily adjusted, his own interests are well looked after, his own safety is assured, his glory as founder of a great nation is fully guaranteed. Still he has more to ask. “He stands *yet* before the Lord.” No sooner have the two men turned their faces toward the doomed city than he begins that humble, earnest, importunate intercession which has ever since been the guide and encouragement of God’s people in their supplications for the worst of sinners.

## XXXVI

### SLANDER—ITS METHODS, MOTIVES AND RESULTS

*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? . . . He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. Ps. 15: 1, 3.*

I begin with tailor-made slander; with the man who manufactures falsehoods out of whole cloth—stories which have not, and which he knows have not, a shadow of foundation.

Next comes the patchwork calumniator. Though not an out-and-out liar, he does more harm than if he were, since his calumnies are less easily refuted. What he does is to pick the worst things out of what is partially true and so put them together as to create in the public mind a thoroughly false impression. By putting the worst construction possible on what may have been said or done, saying not a word about alleviating circumstances, minimizing the good and maximizing the bad, he sends out a damaging report which is, in a way, worse than downright falsehood. The whole truth not being told and what is told being falsely colored, an ingenious patchwork of ill-assorted, mutilated facts is stealthily thrown over the back of a neighbor from behind, who, thus shamelessly attired, goes forth to be suspected by the good and mocked by the vile.

Next comes the truth-telling backbiter who tells of faults that have come to his personal knowledge, but which he is in duty and honor bound to keep to himself; telling them gratuitously with the two-fold mean intent; first, of letting the fault be known; and, second, by going on to excuse it, of gaining for himself a reputation for charitableness. Instead of "seeking love by covering the transgression," he seeks a selfish gain by revealing it. Were he "of a faithful spirit, he would conceal the matter."

He, again, is involved in like guilt who helps to circulate incriminating reports, even though he may have had nothing to do with originating them. Many do this who would scorn to do the other. They hold themselves blameless if they tell only what they hear. On the contrary, it is just this tale-bearing that makes most of the trouble. Were there none to retail his wares, the fabricator of slander would soon have to go out of business. He derives all his importance and all his success from those who lend their more respectable names to his falsehoods or exaggerations. "This is that which maintains and gives subsistence to calumny, which would starve and die of itself if no one gave it a lodging. When malice pours it out, if our ears be shut against it and there be no vessel to receive it, it would fall like water upon the ground and could no more be gathered up."

To the question, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"



comes for answer, "he that backbiteth not with his tongue;" but it is added, "Nor he that *taketh up* a reproach against his neighbor." "Where there is no tale-bearing, the strife ceaseth." Since the Hebrew word for talebearer signifies a "peddler," we have him here described as one "who picks up ill-natured stories at one house and utters them at another, bartering slanders by way of exchange."

Again, we violate the spirit of the ninth commandment whenever we entertain and countenance damaging rumors, though we may take no part in either starting or spreading them. The essence of the sin consists in our being glad to hear such reports, and to have them disseminated; in our being inwardly pleased to see others brought into disrepute. We are bound, on the contrary, not to *receive* remarks obnoxious to the good name of our fellows: and particularly of those to whom we would appear friendly. "Thou shalt not receive (marginal reading) a false report." "The north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." We are not to stand silent and see a neighbor's fair reputation slaughtered before our very eyes. Promptly, decidedly and manfully we are to defend a neighbor's good name when it is unjustly or causelessly assailed. And our defence should be hearty and whole-souled—not "prefacing our defence with a feigned regret and semblance of pitying our neighbor and adding withal some words of commending him in somewhat else."

Then there is pantomime slander. "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he teacheth with his fingers; frowardness is in his heart; he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord." This back-biting with a wink, a word, a gesture, a shrug of the shoulders, a leer, a cough, a laugh, a sentence half uttered and not completed, is often the cruelest kind of slander—just enough being said or done to allow full play to the busy imaginations of those who hear—the dastardly trick of shrewd men who do the mischief, but who know how to shift the responsibility upon less dishonest people; who keep themselves in the background while secretly they work the wires; whisperers who say in a confidential undertone what they mean that others shall speak out plainly and openly.

## MOTIVES TO SLANDER

With some it is sheer envy. "At the expense of the good name and esteem of others the back-biter seeks to increase his own; out of others' ruins to build up himself, and for this reason inclines always to hear and speak of the imperfections and dispraise of others rather than to their advantage. The good man needs not this dishonest way to raise himself, but is glad to see whatever is praiseworthy flourish in whomsoever. Lover of God and of His glory, he is glad to see many enriched with His best gifts."

With others the secret dragging down of a

neighbor's good standing is the working out of a settled, deep-seated, but carefully concealed purpose of revenge for some real or fancied injury or affront. The revenger speaks neither good or bad, but waits and watches for the fit time when his purpose can be most safely and surely accomplished.

With others, again, the sin has its root in a thoughtless propensity to gossip; it is so much easier for them to talk about people than about anything else.

#### THE EVILS OF SLANDER

The harm from evil-speaking is by no means confined to those thus spoken against. One after another becomes entangled in this net of Satan. Friends take sides. Harsh censures provoke uncharitable speeches in return until, at length, an entire neighborhood (or church, it may be) is involved in broil and strife. Families are set at variance, friends converted into enemies, neighbors into strangers. Harmony, hospitality and peace sicken and die, and every office of kindness is interrupted. A disparaging remark concerning a parent to a child, concerning a teacher to a pupil, concerning a pastor to a parishioner, may destroy or greatly lessen the influence of parent, teacher or pastor over those to whom, or in whose hearing the injurious remark is made. No wonder, if from such seed be reaped a harvest of insubordination, discord and revolt. "To the happiness of good neighborhood succeeds a train of

groveling, base, serpentine hostilities, depraving all who practice them and distressing all against whom they are practised."

"It cannot be supposed that in such a course of hostilities against his fellowmen the slanderer will escape the common resentment of those whom he has injured. An enemy to all men, all men at length become enemies to him. Such as have smarted from his tongue will take care to make him smart in return. He is likely to be excluded in due time from all decent society, and to be openly treated to indignities which he knows not how to brook yet dare not resist."

Hence the truth of the proverb that "the back-biter wounds three at once—him against whom he speaks, him who hears, and, most of all, himself."

## XXXVII

### THE FOOLISH FORMALIST

*Fools! did not he that made that which is without make that which is within, also? Luke 11:40.*

It is at a morning hour, and before He has broken His fast of the night, that Jesus is addressing a great, out-door, surging crowd of eager listeners. Naturally, He is in need of bodily refreshment. The Pharisee, therefore, who makes bold to interrupt the speaking by inviting the speaker to his house for breakfast has set down to his credit an act of true and most seasonably offered kindness. As the invitation is promptly accepted, why is the accompanying and customary invitation to wash before eating just as promptly declined?

Certainly not because Jesus sees anything wrong in the custom itself. Did He not, on another occasion, administer a delicate reproof to another Pharisee for having neglected so usual a mark of social courtesy? In the present instance, the reason for abstaining lies in the superstitious notion which leads this Pharisee to "marvel" at the omission. The simple non-compliance with a social custom would be too small a matter to make him "marvel." No, but he is a slave to the tradition that the man is morally defiled who ventures to eat with unwashed hands. With the same religious scrupulosity he washes

cups, pots, couches and brazen vessels, and many other like things he does. He fasts often. He is strict to pay his tithes. He tithes even the smallest herbs, the mint and the rue, of his garden. He lays conscientious stress on all these little details. He makes many uncalled-for additions to even the ceremonial requirements of the law.

While doing this, however, he neglects the one and the only really essential thing—the state of his heart. He makes everything of the outside, having little thought or care for that which is within. So he be punctilious in outwardly worshipping of God, it matters little how he feel toward, or how he treat, his fellow men. If he make “long prayers,” and make them long enough, he then has no scruple about enriching himself by oppressing the poor, even to the point of devouring widows’ houses. The motive of his religious performances is of no account with him, so the motions be gone through with. With him motive and motion are one. When he fasts, he wants people to know it. He calls their attention to it by disfiguring his face. When he gives alms, he wants people to know that. He employs a trumpeter for that purpose.

At the breakfast table by which we now suppose ourselves standing, Jesus takes occasion to expose the folly of this Phariseeism. He shows that it is neither more or less than sheer hypocrisy; and he furthermore shows that such hypocrisy is foolish. “Fools,” He says. “What fools!”



would be our impatient, sarcastic way of saying it.

He does not say, "Ye wicked." Folly is not necessarily wickedness. Of course, the choice of a wrong end is as wicked as it is foolish. But folly, as such, consists simply in the use of means which are ill-adapted to secure the end in view, whatever that end may be. Two lawmakers may be equally honest; they may wish, one as truly as the other, that only such laws shall be passed as will be for the public good. Yet one of them may be foolish and the other wise. The foolish lawmaker, like the sincere but foolish reformer, may defeat the very end he has in view, since "Good motive even is unavailing without good method."

The formalist is foolish in that he defeats his own purpose. Why does he go through the forms of devotion? Only because he hopes to gain by his hypocrisy. But success depends on his playing the hypocrite so successfully as to avoid detection. If those whom he fancies he is deceiving see through the disguise, he not only misses the mark, but he is worse off than he was before he put himself in the way of being detected. He not only gains nothing; he loses incalculably. He thought to gain respect. Instead, he incurs the scorn of those on whom he thinks to impose.

It is hazardous always to attempt this even with men. Still with men it is not absolutely foolish, since men do and must, as a rule, look only on



the outside of things. They cannot see the heart, and thus it is that a man may make a mask so perfect that men shall not see that it is a mask, at all. The man who tries to palm himself off on the world for what he is not, is not, therefore, absolutely and necessarily, a fool.

But the man *is* a fool, always and absolutely, who tries to impersonate either piety or charity before God. God sees behind the mask as clearly as He sees the mask. With Him, therefore, the self-flattering formalist misses his mark. Thinking to win favor with God as well as with men, he incurs, instead, only the all-seeing One's most pronounced displeasure.

Jesus exposes and illustrates this supreme folly, thus: "Now do you, Pharisees, make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Fools! Did not He that made that which is without make that which is within, also?"

What would any one of us think of the man who, under the guise of friendliness, should offer us a cup however beautifully and elaborately designed and decorated, if upon looking into it we should see a clear proof that some selfish motive lay at the bottom of the gift? Just as little does God care for mere forms of worship—the gorgeous cathedral, the grand church-edifice, the elaborate singing, the floral decorations, the eloquent prayer, the polished discourse, the chanted creed, the Lord's Prayer recited in unison. It

goes without saying that these are all right and acceptable to God, provided they are but the outward expression of truly thankful, adoring, penitent and loving hearts. Yet, considering the fascination which fixed forms of worship have to the unreflecting, is not the self-deception of symbolatry a danger and a sin against which even the most sincere worshippers should be continually on their guard?

### XXXVIII

#### TWO KINDS OF RELIGION, AND THE BETTER OF THE TWO

*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

*And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying: God be merciful to me, a sinner. Luke 18: 10-13.*

In creed, these two men are alike. They believe, one as fully as the other, that God is pleased with those who do right and displeased with those who do wrong; and that to be on good terms with God is therefore, or should be, every man's chief concern.

There is this difference, however. One of these two men is quite at his ease because he has never thought of doubting but that he is on the very best of terms with God, already. His prayer reads like a good prayer, certainly—a good prayer of a good man. He asks God for nothing; he has only thanks to give for what God has already done for him. And what this Pharisee thanks God for is the very best thing that any man can pray for; or, if he has it, that he has the

greatest reason to be thankful for—not that he is such a learned, highly respected, well-to-do man—no, but that he is such an out-and-out good man; that he has been led of God to give first consideration to the scrupulous performance of his devotional duties.

Naturally, too, it would seem to be still greater cause for thanksgiving, if a man be not only good, but if he cannot but see that he is better than other men. It is so with this Pharisee. Other men are extortioners; he, thank God, is not one of them. Other men are unjust; he is not one of them either, thank God. Other men are adulterers; again, God be praised, he is not an adulterer. No doubt, he might have made his list of negations longer. He did, in fact, make it longer; as long as the added list of mean, disloyal and dishonest things for the doing of which he held the average publican in such supreme contempt.

Nor is it merely for the bad things he had not done that he is thankful to God; but even more, perhaps, for the good things he has done. Was it not a good thing to fast, now and then? Yes, we are all in danger, at least three times every day, of either eating and drinking what is not good for us; or, if not that, of eating and drinking more than is good for us. Fasting, now and then, if done in the right way, helps toward keeping us from becoming slaves to these dangerous appetites. And, this Pharisee fasts regularly and

often; as often as twice every week. Another thing he says he has done; he has paid his "church-dues," as we would now call them—the tithes assessed on his property for the support of the priests, the maintenance of the synagogue and temple worship and for charity to the poor. And here, certainly, he makes a good point in his own favor. He sends in an honest, a complete list; "I pay tithes of all that I possess; yes, even to the anise, cummin and rue of my garden." That was a good thing under the Old Testament way of doing such things, and it is just as good a thing now under our New Testament way. It is something, now, for any man to be sincerely thankful for, if he find it in his heart to give as God has prospered him for the support and spread of the gospel of Christ and for the comfort of those in need. This Pharisee's prayer is, therefore, an exceptionally good prayer—that is, if he be at heart the exceptionally good man he believes himself to be.

We turn now to the other man's prayer; to the prayer of the publican.

It is the exact opposite, we see, to the prayer of the Pharisee; the exact opposite in that he has nothing good, absolutely nothing, to say for himself. But, why not? Has not he, too, his good points? Is he not kind to those who are kind to him? Is he not prompt to salute his brethren? To exchange civilities with his friends? Is he not a man of steady-going, business habits? He

has, no doubt, a comfortable home, and to his hospitable table does he not invite his friends; and, at times, even strangers? There are plenty of worse men; men who go by the name of "sinners"—men, yes and women too, who do things he would never even think of doing; men and women who are in a discredited class by themselves. For, be it remembered, the fault-finding Pharisees and scribes did not ask the disciples of Jesus: "Why eateth your Master with publicans who are such notorious sinners"? The question was: "Why eateth your Master with publicans *and* sinners"?—both classes despised, but for very different reasons.

Had the publican of my text had the Pharisee's disposition he, like the Pharisee, would have thanked God that he was not like other men: idlers, vagabonds, debauchees, adulterers. He, also, would have rehearsed to God some of the good things he had done; that he had always been polite to those who were polite to him, and how he had lent money to those who had lent money to him.

But not a word of all this. And why? Because it has been given him to see that this exchange of neighborly good offices is, after all, only a kind of refined selfishness; done not out of that true, heart-love which God requires; and that such supreme regard for one's own pleasure, or advantage is the real root of all, of even the worst, evil. He sees that, at heart, he is as bad as any



of those whom, in common with people generally, he has been in the habit of calling "sinners." Indeed, he now calls himself "a sinner." And Oh, how great a sinner does he now see himself to be! How unworthy in the sight of Him who judges not by the outward appearance but by the innermost secrets of the heart. He now sees what he had never so much as dreamed of before, that he has always put love of self before love to God and his neighbor; that, therefore, he has never had any true, unselfish love for either. He has no excuse to offer; he asks for no indulgence on the ground of either ignorance, heredity or environment. He acknowledges himself a "sinner" whose one great need is that he be forgiven. So heart-broken is he over his sins that he cannot so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smites upon his breast, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Here, then, are the two kinds of religion set before us by our Lord in this parable—one, a self-congratulating, self-justifying religion; the other, a self-humbling, sin-confessing, God-justifying religion. Which is the better of the two?

Suppose the question to be, "Which is, on the whole, the better of two specified towns to live in?" Here is a man who has lived in one of these towns, only; has never seen the other and knows nothing of it, except by hearsay. Here is another man who has lived in both towns; who is, therefore in a condition to make an intelligent comparison between them.



Fortunately for us, we know of a man who had made thorough trial of both these religions. He compares the two for us ; or, rather, he has found one of them so much better than the other that he says there is no comparison between them. There were, he admits, some good points about the first ; the self-complacent, self-sufficient, self-justifying kind. He goes on to enumerate these good points, adding that he has himself more of them to his credit than has any other man he knows. "I was dedicated to God," he says, "in earliest infancy. I had a pious ancestry, reaching back nearly two thousand years. I was a religionist of the strictest sort ; was scrupulously careful to do all the little traditional things of our ceremonial law. As to our moral code, I was as careful about observing that as I was about compliance with our ecclesiastical requirements. Touching that righteousness, also, I was absolutely blameless. In short, I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a Pharisee of the Pharisees. So firmly convinced, indeed, was I that this religion of ours was the only true religion, that I did my best to put down and stamp out a certain new and contrary religion that was springing up around us—proclaiming the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God by simple faith in one who, as I firmly believed, was a self-seeking imposter, drawing multitudes after him to their undoing."

All at once, however, this man is made to see how lamentably and how dangerously mistaken he

has been about this same Jesus ; how blind to that very promise of a Deliverer which "the twelve tribes" had been, day and night, praying God to fulfill. Then when the Deliverer came, they killed Him, and went on killing or imprisoning His disciples. He was, as he himself confessed, the foremost one of these persecutors. "I was," he says, "exceedingly mad against them. I persecuted them even to strange cities, and if ever the question came up whether they should be killed or not, I not only cast my vote against them, but I did it with a right good will,\* for I surely thought that I was doing God service by so doing."

Little wonder, then, that he is deeply humbled now that Jesus has caused the scales to fall from his eyes, so that he sees what a proud and self-righteous heart lay under the deceitful semblance of this extraordinary zeal for God. No wonder he feels himself to be almost past hope of forgiveness ; that he would, indeed, have despaired of obtaining forgiveness, but that he had sinned "ignorantly, in unbelief." Behold, now, the miracle of grace by which Saul, the self-exalting Pharisee, is changed into Paul, the self-humbling publican ! "God be merciful to me, the chief of sinners," is now his most earnest prayer.

He "obtains" mercy. And now he knows Christ as the Saviour through whom have come to him

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\*The Greek has this intensive meaning.

an enlightened conscience, a penitent and contrite heart, and peace with God. So exceedingly precious is this knowledge of Christ to him that he now makes absolutely nothing of what he had made everything of, before. He finds that what he had so fondly thought to be gold is counterfeit, and worse than worthless. "The things that were gain to me," he says, "those I count as loss for Christ; and not those things only, but I count everything else but loss; and the reason for my doing so is that I find the knowledge of Christ is so much better; so unspeakably better that, instead of counting it a sacrifice, what I have given up seems to me only as so much trash to be thrown on the rubbish-pile, so I may make sure of winning Christ, and of being found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith."

It is not said (be it carefully noted) that the "certain" to whom the parable was spoken were either Pharisees or publicans. There may have been among them some of both. All Pharisees were not hypocrites. Paul was not. Neither, we may believe, was the Pharisee of our Lord's parable. Instead of being ostentatiously "long," his prayer was unusually short; offered, too, not in a synagogue or at a street corner, but in the temple—the "house of prayer." We have no ground for concluding that he was one of those who "devoured widows' houses." Some publicans,

too, were honest—good husbands, fathers, neighbors and citizens. Such, no doubt, was Matthew; first, the publican, and afterward, the apostle. No, the parable is directed not against Pharisees as such, but pointedly and particularly against those of whatever name or of no name who “trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others”; who make little or no account of any whose morality, as they imagine, is either somewhat less moral than their own, or is of a somewhat less select sort.

By all seriously disposed persons it will, of course, be readily admitted that of the two religions set forth in this parable, the better must be that which is approved, accepted and rewarded by God. It is not enough that we worship. There are worshippers with whom God is not well pleased. There are prayers offered which were as well left unsaid. If, wishing to be sure and safe in so great a matter, any earnest inquirer finds himself unwilling to trust even so signal an experience as was that of Saul the Pharisee and Paul the publican, let him rejoice that he has for his guidance the assurance of Jesus Himself that God “had respect” to the publican and his prayer, but that to the Pharisee and his prayer “He had not respect”; that it was the publican who, as he left the temple, “went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

## XXXIX

### HEART-RECEPTION OF JESUS

*And he made haste and came down and received Him joyfully. This day is salvation come to this house. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. Luke 19: 6, 9, 10.*

Jesus is now on this, his third and his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. He has reached Jericho. He needs no introduction; his fame has preceded him. So extensively has He travelled during the three years of his public ministry, so astonishing the doctrines He has taught and the deeds He has wrought, that his name has become a household word in even the remotest corner of the land. He is everywhere spoken of as the man who makes it his business to go about doing good; the man who not only preaches a life of supreme love to God and equal love to one's neighbor, but whose own life stands squarely with his preaching. Nowhere do people tire of hearing and telling the beautiful story of his love; of his compassion for the sick; for the deaf, dumb, and blind; for the bereaved; for the poor, and the oppressed; for the most despised of outcast sinners—the story that He has so much at heart the wants and sufferings of others as to make little account of his own.

Such being the celebrity He has gained, we should of ourselves infer the eagerness of all

classes of people to see and to hear Him. "Of course," we say, as we read such accounts as these, that "His fame went throughout all Syria;" that "there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond Jordan"—the multitudes made up largely, it is true, of those seeking instruction or cure, but in greater number, of people impelled by a natural curiosity not only to hear and see such wonderful things said and done, but even more to get a near sight of the man who says and does them. Just as, to-day, men of all political beliefs come from far and near to see with their own eyes the man who has won the highest honor in the nation's gift.

Such an excited crowd now surrounds and accompanies Jesus as He enters and passes through the city of Jericho. How will the people of the town, and especially its most influential citizens, receive Him? That is a question which it is of greater concern for them to answer than it is for Him. He is not wondering nervously whether the political or the ecclesiastical magnates will extend him a welcome in behalf of the city. He desires no compliments, acceptance of which might embarrass his uttering woes against iniquity in high places as well as in low, or which might shake his standing with the people at large as a divinely authorized teacher of religion and morals. Dishonest officials will naturally enough either fight, or fight shy of, this man whose exposures and re-



bukes tend to bring both themselves and their conduct into openly pronounced popular disesteem.

One such official is living in Jericho. He is a publican; one, that is, who is engaged in doing business for the public. His business is to appraise property and to assess and collect taxes. He is the town-treasurer. To assist him he has subordinates for whose conduct in office he is held responsible. He is "chief of the publicans." In this free country of ours we choose men to do this appraising and tax-collecting business for us. We pay them fixed salaries for doing it. But Syria is, at the time of my text, a conquered Roman province. The appointee buys from the government this appraising and tax-collecting privilege—his contract holding him to only the paying of a stipulated sum to the government, while whatever more he may contrive in ways of his own choosing to gather in, he appropriates as so-called compensation for his so-called services—a unique field for graft, for the exercise of predatory avarice, limited only by its ability to wring from suffering and protesting but helpless citizens the last farthing unscrupulous greed is able to extort. It follows as a matter of course that, as a rule certainly, this much despised office of publican will be neither sought nor accepted save by a man whose theory of life is this; that on however low a social, intellectual, moral or religious plane a man may be, he is still *the* man for you, provided only that he have plenty of money; that, too,



wholly regardless of his ways of getting it. But for a Jew to accept this office under the hated Roman rule, subjects him not only to the charge of avarice and dishonesty, but to the added odium of disloyalty to his oppressed nation.

Zaccheus is just this kind of renegade publican; so blinded by his covetousness to the best things of life as deliberately to barter away the good-will of his fellow-citizens for his opportunities of dishonest gain; complacently content to be what he knows full well he is, the most disliked and the most generally disliked man in all Jericho.

Not, paradoxical as it may seem, not that he thinks himself so bad a man, after all. Not that he has in so many words given up having any more to do with the moral and religious traditions of his race. Likely enough he continues to attend the synagogue-service and even contributes handsomely to its support. The ten commandments are still a familiar story for him. He knows them by heart. He even flatters himself that after a fashion he has kept them from his youth up. What! the eighth commandment, too? "Well, to be sure, Sinai did thunder as threateningly against the breaking of that commandment as of the other nine, but it thunders less forbiddingly now. The times are different, now. As Moses did not contemplate our modern ways of doing business, we must not take that particular injunction too seriously. It may be well enough to retain it as part of an old historic symbol, the whole

of which is after all chiefly venerable for its antiquity. Creeds and rabbis come and go, but business and my pile go on forever. Loving my neighbor as myself, strict honesty in all my dealings with him—yes, beautiful in theory, but (as shown by the lives of even our most devout, often fasting and most punctually tithe-paying leaders) impossible in practice.” Pricks of conscience now and then? Yes, but Zaccheus, like a certain young lawyer, has learned to justify himself by that easy trick of evasion which consists in asking for definitions. “Love my neighbor as myself? Certainly, but then who *is* my neighbor?” Never yet a rabbi who has given him a satisfactory answer to that crucial, conscience-and-heart-searching question. Zaccheus will see whether or not this new and much be-praised prophet can do anything better. He will get a sight, if he can, of this travelling preacher who, if the half of all that is said of him be true, is the moral wonder of the age. “I will see this Jesus, who he is; whether he looks it or not; whether his figure, voice, manner and face measure up to the high character for which he stands.”

Zaccheus is sitting alone in his office, deeply pondering this important question. He must be quick, for by the steady tramping of feet outside he perceives that Jesus has entered and is passing through the town. He opens his office door, steps down and out, and joins the crowd. But, being little of stature, taller men obstruct his view. It

would cost him a struggle to elbow his way through the crowd, and few, if any, would extend to *him*, at least, the courtesy of giving way. But aroused curiosity is fertile in expedients. He plunges down a side street, runs out of the town, gets well ahead of the procession, climbs a road-side tree and waits the coming of the throng. Mark tells us that it was as Jesus “went *out* of Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude of people” that He cured the two wayside beggars of blindness. Zaccheus as he looked down must have seen this miracle performed; must have heard Jesus say to Bartimeus, “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” and must have heard the joyous acclaim of the people glorifying God for having sent them so powerful as well as so compassionate a Savior.

As he looks and listens, both the conscience and the heart of Zaccheus are most deeply touched—and that not by the miracle alone, but by Jesus himself; the quiet dignity of his manner, the winning tones of his voice, the beaming benignity of his countenance. The publican and Jesus! how at the opposite poles they are, the one from the other in both principle and practice! “This man,” Zaccheus is now saying to himself, “this man choosing for companions the poor, the neglected, the despised, the unfortunate, the disconsolate and discouraged; the deaf and dumb; the blind, the demoniac; the morally degenerate and socially ostracized—bearing all their sins, sufferings and

sorrows as though they were his very own; so bearing them as to remove them; and all done out of pure, self-denying, unrecompensed good-will—and I? What am I and what has my manner of life been? Making heavier the already heavy burdens of the toiling and struggling poor; caring not how others may be impoverished, so that I through their poverty may be made rich. And the outcome of it all as unlike as our lives: He, loved; I, hated; He, followed; I, shunned; His fame, His glory; *my* fame, such as it is, my infamy. How ashamed would I feel to meet this man, face to face; I, who am about the last man in the city, I am sure, whom He would care to see or to whom He would care to speak.”

But the Gospel of Jesus has from the first been full of wonderful and joyous surprises. It is in God's kingdom of grace that the unexpected happens; the most unexpected of all. One of these blessed surprises now awaits Zaccheus. How mean and unworthy his own life now looks to him; how noble and beautiful, in contrast, the character and life of Jesus! As, stirred by these new and self-humiliating thoughts, he fixes his now yearning gaze on Jesus, lo, Jesus looks up and with a strange air of authority, says: “Make haste and come down, Zaccheus, for to-day I must abide in thy house.” Never an invitation more promptly accepted; never a command more quickly or more gladly obeyed. Zaccheus *makes* haste, he comes down, he receives Him joyfully.

Another surprise, now, although of quite a different sort. To the multitudes this honor shown to Zaccheus is a bewildering disappointment—this preacher of righteousness, this champion of the oppressed poor, this denouncer of woes against tyranny and corruption in high places, against rich men harder to be saved than for a camel to go through the needle's eye—to select for his host the most notoriously dishonest, falsely accusing man in all Jericho. No wonder at the sullen discontent to which, not a few envious ones only, but to which all without exception give angry and audible expression. It is a sudden and sad blow to their confidence in their till now idolized leader. Very much as it would have been had Gen. Washington, coming from Philadelphia to take command of the Revolutionary army in Cambridge, chosen as a companion for his journey, in place of that staunch patriot, Gen. Schuyler, some disloyal tory, long known to be bitterly opposed to the American cause. Such a choice, had it been made, would have shaken, for a time at least, the people's confidence in their new commander.

Zaccheus hears the murmuring. He sees that he is himself the occasion of having the good name of the Master compromised with the wondering and complaining multitude. This will not do. He will not let it go so. An explanation is called for, and he is the man to make it. He knows well what the people do not know, that he has wrought no change in Jesus, but that Jesus has wrought

a most blessed change in *him*. "Stop, Lord. Before we take another step I must make this thing right with these old neighbors of mine." He neither crawls, cringes, crouches, nor bends. It is the erect posture that best becomes a noble deed. Standing squarely on his feet, he turns to Jesus and makes, in a manly way, this manly confession: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." "No longer, then, the avaricious, dishonest, hard-hearted official from whose false appraisements and assessments we have so long and so grievously suffered. Gone to be guest of a man that is a sinner? Yes, but why were we so blind as to forget that He has from the first been known as a friend, as *the* friend, of publicans and sinners; that He has before this eaten with them at their home-tables?" Oh, how happily are their doubts now removed, their murmurings silenced, and their hearts warmed, as it is borne in upon them anew that eating and drinking with even the worst of sinners has meant no compromise with their sins, but that it does mean the most loving purpose to win them from their evil ways to heartfelt repentance, to the peace of forgiveness, to the joy of a holy life; that He seeks the lost, but only to save them. "This day," declares Jesus, "this day is salvation come to this house."

#### A HINDERING HIERARCHY

1. We see, now, whence salvation comes; that



it comes from a reception of Jesus Christ as Lord of the heart and of the life. This is the secret of the great change in Zaccheus. True, what Jesus said was "I must abide in thy house," but Zaccheus has already opened wide the door of his heart and it is there that Jesus has already taken up his abode, not for a day only, but for all days and for ever. Any reception of Jesus other than this falls short of salvation. A physician comes to cure you of an otherwise fatal sickness. You receive him politely, but only as a friendly visitor. You engage him, or try to engage him, in conversation on a great variety of topics; on the latest scientific discoveries, on the progress of invention, literature and the arts, on the political situation of the country, on new educational theories; you wish to draw him out, perhaps, on evolution and the higher criticism—interesting and important topics, but if this be as far as you care to go, the physician has not been properly or even honestly "received." If this be all, he will go away, grieved and disappointed, perhaps offended. "If you do not need me as a physician, there are others who do both need and want me; my time is precious and to them I must go." It is to sin-sick hearts that Jesus comes—comes to make them whole. This is the first and chief lesson from my text.

2. The second lesson is that this change from heart-brokenness to heart-wholeness, from spiritual death to spiritual life comes or may come



quickly. How long does it take to accept an invitation? How long, when a friend is at the door, to open the door and receive him? How long did it take Zaccheus to come down from the tree and receive Jesus? He was told to "make haste." Well does he know that he is not worthy to be the host of such a guest. But he knows also that Jesus knows that as well, and a great deal better, than he knows it himself. Yet, knowing it all, He says, "Come." The publican does not argue the question with either Jesus or himself. He does not give way, not even for a moment, to doubt or fear. He is like that Mary whose brother Lazarus Jesus has restored to life and to her; that Mary of whom Tennyson writes:

"All subtle thought, all curious fears  
Borne down by gladness so complete,  
She bows, she bathes the Savior's feet  
With costly spikenard and with tears."

3. This leads us to the third lesson of my text which is, that this receiving of Jesus into the heart should be and may be and often is, attended from the very first with joy. It was so with Zaccheus: "he received him joyfully." No self-righteous, grace-postponing, grace-dishonoring penance to be first undergone, no fasting, no sack-cloth and ashes, no agonizing, because only half-believing, prayers; no shutting of one's self away from the sweet light of day; from any of the duties, cares, responsibilities, or unforbidden pleasures and enjoyments of life.

If passing through the gloom of some penitential purgatory were ever a prerequisite to the joy of forgiveness, it might well have been so for those three thousand to whom Peter on the day of Pentecost had brought home the wickedness of putting to the most shameful death, a man by his good deeds approved of God in the midst of them, and that man their own Messiah. "What shall we do," they ask in alarm, "to escape the consequences of such guilt? Assign us any task, we will at once undertake it. Put us on any course of self-denial, we will follow it. Lay on us the burden of any sacrifice whatever of ease, time or possessions; we will bear it, Oh so willingly, with such welcoming submission. Only tell us what we must do to be saved." And what is the apostle's answer? "Great as your sin is, are you at heart sorry for it? Well, that is all. On the instant you are saved. Now, make open confession of your sorrow and of your trust in God's offered mercy, by being baptized in the name of that same crucified Jesus now acknowledged as your Lord; do this and you are not saved merely; but you, too, shall receive this most precious of all gifts, the gift of the Holy Spirit." Who of them were thus baptized; who of them did receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Those who "received the word." And how did they receive it? As Zaccheus received the invitation and command of Jesus—instantly, gladly, joyfully.

We learn once more from the text that Jesus

comes to each sinner as directly, as individually, as though he were the only sinner needing Him as a Savior. We know how hard, how almost impossible it is for any ordinary man to get a personal interview with any of our world-kings. He must have some one at court to speak for him. Not so, our Jesus, though He be King of kings and Lord of lords. Did He say to Zaccheus, "I cannot receive a man like you, nor be received by you in any familiar, informal way. If I deal with you at all, it must be through either the ruler of your synagogue, or your high priests or the elders of your great council." Oh, how blindly does any such thought misrepresent and how dreadfully dishonor our Jesus! Anything is infinite dishonor to Him, and an unspeakable wrong to those seeking Him as a Savior—anything whatever which makes Him seem to be so offended with sinners that it is only through some more compassionate intermediary that they can gain even a favorable consideration of their case. Yet, strange as it may seem, even pastor and church may unwittingly allow themselves to stand as just such intermediary hindrances in the way of sinners earnestly seeking salvation.

It was during a revival when many had long been anxiously, but as yet unsuccessfully, seeking salvation, that I heard the pastor say to them: "I fear lest you are clinging to your pastor's skirts for your salvation. If so, I shake you off."

"But," asks one, "may it not help open the way

to the heart of Jesus, if I first join the church, and partake of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper?" "Absurd," you may be ready to answer; yet, ill-considered as it may seem to us now, just such, one hundred and fifty years ago, was the "half-way covenant" plan of many of our New England churches. "Join the church"? But what *is* the church? If we mean by it the one true, spiritual church on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is composed of those, and of those only, to whom salvation has already come by a true, heart-reception of Jesus. How pertinently and with what unmistakable clearness was this declared at Pentecost, of which we read: "*And the Lord added daily those who had been saved to the church.*" Not, let it be noted, that the *Lord added daily to the saved such as had joined the church!* Yet, it is precisely this perversion of the reading and of the divine order that makes possible, as indeed it has made actual, a human *hierarchy*; or, as the word means, "a ruling over, a controlling, a monopolizing of sacred things"—the sole repository as it is claimed of all that is implied in the salvation of men's souls; a divinely authorized attorneyship to undertake any and every sinner's case and to guarantee its successful settlement with God—a claim which, however unwittingly, none the less deplorably and dangerously, "frustrates the *grace*," the freely forgiving mercy, of God; takes the "All hail" from the name of Jesus, the Savior; robs

the cross of its chief glory, the full, free, immediate forgiveness of the worst sins of the worst sinners. Well may we to whom God has given it to know, and rejoice in,—this blessed liberty of faith, well may we “protest” against that inversion, as it is a perversion, of that Pentecostal declaration—against every hindrance which seeks to thrust itself in between Savior and sinner. But, whether we make formal protest or not, every Christ-receiving, trusting and gratefully loving disciple of Jesus, is in himself a living protest against every form and degree of such a grace-hindering, grace-dishonoring intrusion and interference as would weaken or postpone the assurance of Jesus, “This day is salvation come to this house.”

## XL

### AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER

*Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. Ps. 71:9.*

The old man is David, and this is his prayer, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth."

Since we could not "cast off" one whom we had never taken on; could not "forsake" one whom we had never befriended, we find in this prayer first of all, an implied acknowledgment of God's loving care, hitherto. Such thankful acknowledgment it has always been the best part of David's happiness to make. Very early in life he learned in the beautiful lesson of humility the true secret of worthiest success. "Once on a time," so he reassured the faint-hearted Saul, "while I was keeping my father's sheep, and there came a lion and took a lamb out of the flock, I caught him by the beard and smote him and slew him, and the same Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion will deliver me now out of the hand of this Philistine." Was he afterward saved from the hand of Saul and of all his enemies? Did he find himself, at length, not only peacefully enthroned, but have the undoubted assurance that his house and his kingdom should be established forever? Did he live to see completely baffled even Absalom's conspiracy against his throne and his life? For all



his deliverances, for all his victories, for all his glorious service to his country and generation, he ever gave most thankful praise to that one Friend who, as he declared, was a Friend not only from, but even before his birth—the Friend to whom he owed life itself and all those powers of body and mind, through the faithful exercise of which his life had been made such a blessing to the world. Had he songs of triumph? Yes; but, sweetest psalmist of Israel as he was also her greatest king, he was sure to turn each chant of victory into a hymn of praise. The psalm itself in which he deprecates being cast off and forsaken abounds still in thanksgiving for what has been and in confiding hope for all that is to be.

“But,” asks one, “why the petition then? Is it not at odds with the expectation?” No, since the petition is but the instinctive, unreasoning cry of conscious weakness for renewed assurance of God’s presence and love. Second childhood, like the first, has its felt need of most considerate kindness. Withdrawn from the activities of life, it is thrown back, more and more, upon whatever garnered stores it has of strength and comfort. David has had a strenuous time of it in camp, field and court. From all that he is now laid aside. He is King still, but only in name. Such compelled retirement from the world’s business invites to thought about higher things. It takes the place of that supreme effort of will by which alone in youth and middle life we attend at all to the wants,



claims and issues of our spiritual nature. The world gets its best proof of the preciousness of God's care and love from the witnessing of very aged Christians who testify to their having found in Him the ideal friend—the kind of friend, and the only kind it is really worth while having—one who is as good a friend to-day and will be to-morrow as he was yesterday and the day before; as true a friend when we are in any sort of trouble as when all goes prosperously with us; when we are sick the same as when we are well; when we are weak as when we are strong; when we have lost money, position and dearest earthly friends as when we possessed them; who makes as much of us, and even a little more, when we are old and feeble as when we were young and strong.

Our joy in this Heavenly Friend is greatly enhanced by our seeing to what an extent the old are neglected by the world, generally; how young people especially are led to look on them, if not with amusing pity, at best, with a self-complacent compassion. Said an observer of how old age is neglected in America: "It seems an impertinence on this side the globe to be alive after sixty, and I have often thought how much we lose by not cultivating fine old-fashioned ladies and gentlemen. Our aged friends and relatives seem to be tucked away, now-a-days, into neglected corners, as though it were the correct thing to give them a long preparation for still narrower quarters. For my own part, comely and debonair old age is most

attractive, and when I see the thick silver-white hair lying on a serious and weather-worn face, like moonlight on a stout old tower, I have a strong tendency, whether I know the person or not, to lift my hat in token of my affectionate esteem and reverence."

There is, I think, no one thing in the life of Frances Burney (afterward Madame D'Arblay) more attractive than the beautiful attachment she formed for the aged Mrs. Delaney; a young lady of genius and fame, who would gladly at any time forego the brilliant assemblies of wit, learning and fashion where her praises were on every lip, that she might share the ripe wisdom, while she cheered the widowed loneliness, of her beloved friend of fourscore years.

How sadly unlike to this the feeling of some who even wonder why the old are permitted to live and who think that the sooner they die the better. Specially fitting and sure of being graciously answered, most comforting for such aged persons is the Psalmist's prayer, "Do not Thou cast me off in the time of old age; do not Thou forsake me when my strength faileth."

## XLI

### FAITH'S TRANQUILITY

*He that believeth shall not make haste.* Is. 28: 16.

As a motto for this New Year there has come to me this: "He that believeth shall not make haste"—a motto which, if carried out in practice, will make the year a happy one for us.

A year ago we were wishing one another a "Happy New Year." We were more than wishing; we were hoping that the year would prove a happy one for those thus cordially saluted. But in the case of some our wishes and hopes failed of fulfillment. Our ranks have been thinned. In all likelihood, it will be so in the present year. No one of us owns the house—the body—he lives in. He cannot rent it even. If I rent a house for a year and have the lease drawn up in due and legal form I have in some degree a settled feeling. I have shelter for myself and family for a year at least. If, besides, the lease gives me an option at the end of the year for five years more, I have a more comfortable feeling still. But our great Landlord, Houselord and Lifelord vouchsafes no leases of land, house or life. He claims the right to turn us out of house and home, not only any month or week, but any hour of any day or any night, and to do this without giving us the slightest notice. Then the day He turns us out! If

the undertaker would come with a van and pile into it our friend's belongings—wardrobe, furniture, books, pictures—we would not mind it so much. He might take them and carry them away and either cremate or bury them. But instead of a van he comes with a hearse and takes away the husband, the wife, the father, the mother, the child, the sister or brother. This is what may happen during the present year, and be we at our work, our pastimes, our devotions, there sits over them this "mute shadow watching all."

"But why talk to us in this doleful fashion on this first morning of the glad New Year?"

Had I thought of stopping here I would not have begun. Had I nothing better to say I would say nothing. Something vastly brighter and better there is, and I turn to it.

The Lord of our lands, of our homes, of our lives is no such hard-hearted, unmerciful proprietor as ever to dispossess His children without the best of reasons for doing it. He is a compassionate, loving Father. He wishes us to have so strong a hold on life, on the true life; on happiness, the true happiness, that we can keep our hold of them. He would not have us play with shadows; would not have us be ever like children blowing bubbles to see them break as soon as blown. He has prepared a solid foundation for us on which to build both our hopes and our happiness; rather, on which we ourselves may be built, and built to stay. "Behold," He says, "I

lay for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. He that believeth shall not make haste."

This is where we make our start—the foundation. The foundation for the twenty-two stories building at the corner of Broadway and Pine streets, New York, was prepared without regard to cost of time, labor or money. Those who saw this done have now no fear of going into that building, into any part of it, and of staying in it, as long as they may choose. God spared no cost, no sacrifice, necessary to the laying of a sure foundation for all our varied, for our utmost need. "He spared not His own Son, but freely gave him up for us all," that in Him might be laid deep and strong the foundation for our pardon, our peace with God and ourselves, our eternal well being. Those who will be at the trouble to carefully examine this foundation are not afraid to rest their all upon it, for this world and for the world to come.

How safe would we like to be? "As safe," do you say, "as Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Paul, Peter?" Well, we are exactly as safe as they, provided we rest ourselves on the same foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ—"built upon the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles"—but they and we with them, built on Christ, the "Chief Corner-stone."

Suppose that, if we have not done it before, we

do now say, "Yes; I do trust to the promised mercy and love of God through the Lord Jesus Christ," what is our Father's word to us then? He would have us go back with free and glad hearts to all the work and enjoyment of our every-day life; to do and enjoy all with perfect tranquility of mind; free from all haste and hurry, anxiety and fear; to do quietly, leisurely and well whatever it is given us to do. Is it pans of milk you are to skim? Skim them. Rooms to sweep and dust? Meals to prepare? Dishes to wash? Sewing and mending? Work in mill, factory, office or store? Do all as under the loving Taskmaster's eye. Do not say, "I wish this was out of the way, so that I could take up something better." *There is nothing better just now.* This is the ideal thing for you to do. The kind of occupation makes less difference with God than we are, perhaps, apt to think. We talk about choice, select occupations, but we can put just as loving and faithful service into one occupation as in any other. Suppose, then, we take for this year's motto:

"He that believeth shall not make haste."



## XLII

### FORWARD

*And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*  
Acts 1:7, 8.

We now see clearly enough the two mistakes which these honest-hearted but narrow-minded followers of Jesus are making as, just before His ascension, they put to Him the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel."

Their first mistake is seen in the use they make of the word "restore."

For what is it to restore? It is simply to bring back to a former condition. For any increase of the Kingdom, therefore, they seem neither to look or to wish. Enough, if Jesus will recover for His people the splendor of the first temple and the glory of the reigns of David and Solomon. So, although just on the eve of Pentecost, they are looking backward instead of forward; sighing for the return of the old when they should be alert to greet and embrace the new. Standing at the very threshold of such an enlargement of Messiah's Kingdom as has never yet been seen or adequately conceived, they still turn their backs on these unfolding glories, content to have revived



the dim and feeble adumbrations of the past. That which with God has been but preparatory, intermediate and transient, they in their shortsightedness would make permanent and final. Because its blossoms have fallen, they would have restored to the tree its flowering splendors and that, too, although the time of its richest fruitage is just at hand.

Jesus now gives them this new lesson to learn, that not restoration but progress is the true watchword of His Kingdom, and that He is about to confer on His people such honor and might that even the temple and reign of Solomon himself should have no glory by reason of the greater glory which is to come. Not the Roman yoke, but that far heavier yoke of manifold observances which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear is now to be broken. Instead of bulls and goats and calves and lambs and all the tedious formalities of a veiled, symbolic service, spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise and good works are henceforth to be everywhere acceptable to God. No longer confined to Jerusalem as the one place of obligatory worship, the Father would thenceforth seek anywhere for worshippers those who should worship Him in spirit and in truth. The veil once rent is nevermore to be re-knit or re-hung. Henceforward the heart of each believer is to be a temple of the Holy Ghost—the place where God will write His law, reveal His glory, receive intercession, and answer prayer.

Very soon are those darkened disciples, illumined by that Spirit for which they are directed to pray, to see that not restoration, but expansion and completion are henceforward to be the goal of their hopes, their labors, and their prayers.

The second pre-Pentecostal mistake of the disciples is indicated by the word "Israel"—a misconception as to the race extent of the "kingdom," as the first mistake had been as to its spiritual nature and development. They have no conception that the new privileges and honors of the coming reign are to be enjoyed by any save the literal descendants of Abraham; that from that day onward the bounds and populousness of Immanuel's empire are to have wonderful enlargement; that presently it is to be seen how gloriously comprehensive the word "Israel" is; that it includes in every nation all sincere worshippers of the one living and true God; that Abraham thenceforward is to receive a distinction never yet accorded to him even by his devoted children so jealous of his ancestral fame; that he is to stand forth as the progenitor of a spiritual race in whose world-wide territory Palestine shall be scarcely a noticeable point, of whose swelling host all Judah's millions will be the unit; that the inheritance is not by the law or by natural descent, but by promise and by faith; that they who believe are the children of Abraham; that they who are Christ's are Abraham's seed and heirs; that having broken down the middle wall of partition

between Jew and Gentile and having made in himself of twain one new man, Christ is henceforth the true Israel's bond of union and of peace; a mystery yet to be revealed even to these holy apostles who, as we see, are praying for restoration instead of for fulfilment, for Judea rather than for the world, for Israel rather than for mankind.

The truth is that Judaism had come to be a theocratic monopoly, whereas in reality it was but God's trustee, designed to hold and guard the treasures of divine truth and blessing until such time as He should see fit to call for them, when it was to yield them up for universal distribution. Long possession had so wrought the conviction of not only rightful but exclusive ownership, that when God called for His gracious deposit of love, the Jew would not give it up. It was because Jesus would not be the Jew Christ Jesus, but would be the "*man* Christ Jesus" that they crucified Him. With bad consistency they persecuted Paul because he preached Christ as the Savior of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. Paul gave them a circumstantial account of his conversion, telling them of his earnest wish and prayer that he might tarry among his own countrymen. "But," added Paul, "He said to me, Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." That was more than they would stand: "They gave him audience unto this word and then lifted up their voices and said, 'Away

with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.' And they cried out and cast off their clothes and threw dust into the air." The utterance of that one word "Gentiles" turned that assembly into a howling mob. It was for turning the world upside down by liberally dispensing God's life-giving truth to all classes of men in all nations of the world, according to Christ's command, that Paul was sent to Rome, to prison, and to death.

And how did God dispose of that reactionary intolerance which resisted His plan for the broadest dissemination of His truth?

When Mary would anoint Jesus for His burial, she brought for the purpose an alabaster box of ointment very precious. The box itself may have been beautiful and costly. But it was either so tightly sealed that she could not open it, or so narrow at the lip that it would not pour. But Mary was not to be kept from that tender act of love on which her heart was set. She *broke* the box and poured it on His head, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. When His people resisted, God smote His beautiful casket, the holy temple, full of treasured blessing for the world. He denationalized His own people who resisted, while the consenting church went forth with joy and triumph, dispensing freely in all the world the treasures of life.

The surface waters of the narrow strait which leads to the open Polar Sea are seen to move

southward and to carry the floating ice-fields with them. Yet the great iceberg is seen moving northward against the stream, borne on by the mightier sweep of the waters beneath. So, the current of this world's ambition is set strongly away from the glories of Christ's future reign, carrying down the deluded multitudes on its surface; yet, moving up steadily, sublimely against this opposing current of skepticism and indifference is the kingdom of Christ, a resplendent mountain of light, its base reaching far down into the deep under current of God's great and glorious purposes of salvation. Casting our anchors into the side of this upward moving mountain of light, we shall be borne with it and by it towards the spreading waters of the world's redemption.

### XLIII

#### FREE TO GO BACK, BUT LIKING BETTER TO GO ON

*And truly if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. Heb. 11: 15, 16.*

The calling of Abram was a call to bid good-bye forever to what had always been his home and to go he knew not whither, but to some far-away, strange land which God was to show him.

That was a much harder thing to do then than it would be now. Now a man could hardly say "I know not whither I am going," whatever spot on the entire globe he might be starting for. The whole habitable earth has now been explored. Maps of even the dark continent no longer have "Unexplored Regions" printed across them. Stanley, having small chance to win further laurels as an explorer, takes a quiet seat in the British Parliament. Whatever part of the world a man now be called to go to, he has for his information maps, artificial globes, gazetters, geographies, time-tables and guide-books. Abram had none of these. If he went out he must go without knowing whither he went.

It was by no means an easy thing for Abram



to do, but he was not forced to do it. He was to think it all over carefully, and then go or stay as he saw fit. He thought it over and in the exercise of his own perfect freedom he decided to go.

Along with the command which he was called to obey, God gave him a promise which he was called to believe: that, in case he went out, God would go with him, show him the way, bring him to the place appointed, make him not only a great nation; but, through that nation, a great blessing to the world.

That was a hard thing to believe, but Abram was not forced to believe it. It was for him to say, after thinking the matter over, whether he would believe it or not. Again, in the exercise of his perfect freedom, he chose to believe.

Freely believing and freely obeying he goes out—whither he does not know. Even supposing another Pisgah near enough at hand, it is not given him to see from its top the road leading on to the far away promised land. The road will interpret itself to the traveler as he goes along. Although not knowing whither he goes, he still goes. His going is a going out. His departing is a final, a whole-souled, a forward-looking leave-taking of his old home. He “gathers all together.” He leaves nothing behind as a hostage for his possible return. The proposed journey is not an excursion; no sly, secret, clandestine, stealthy, cautious exploring trip, as a man leaves



his family and business to look at some distant country to see if it be as represented by some flattering promoter; and if not, then to return. No, it is not an excursion but an emigration. He leaves for good and all. He stakes his obedience on the command; his trust on the promise.

This believing and obedient purpose he cleaves to resolutely, undeviatingly. No wavering, no regrets, no looking back. Look at this sturdy, robust adventurer. He journeys. He does not stand still, at a loss to know whether he may not, after all, have been foolish and over hasty in his going out. His course is onward. Which way? "Toward the South"—further and further away from his old Chaldean home.

But what we are now to consider is not that Abram went away freely, but that he and his people staid away as freely as they went: "For verily had they been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to return." They were no more obliged to go on than they were to go out. They were at any point in the journey just as free to stop as they had been to start. They could at any time doubt the promise if they wished to; and, if they so wished, could at any time refuse to complete the journey which they had begun.

Jesus does by every one of us to-day precisely as God did then by Abram. He claims our full belief in all that he says, and our entire obedience to all that he commands. He tells us to think

it over carefully; to look at all sides of the question; and then to make our choice. Here are the teachings of Jesus—do you believe and accept them? Here are His commands—would you like to do them? Here is Jesus Himself—do you freely take Him to be your teacher, example, guide, Savior, and Lord?

The true church of Christ is made up of those who have thus freely given themselves up to the Lord Jesus Christ; to trust Him fully and to obey Him fully.

As, at the first, it was with all such a matter of free choice whether or not to begin the service of Christ, so it is still and will continue to be to the end, a matter of freeest choice with them whether to continue in his service or not.

I think it should be more generally understood than I fear it is, that a man is just as free after becoming a Christian as he was before. Some seem to have the idea that a church is much like a trap or a spring-cage; that persons, young persons especially, enter it under some momentary excitement of happiness, sympathy or fear, but that once in the church their freedom is abridged; that after a while they find that their hearts are just as much set on the world as they ever were, and that then they stay in the church only or mostly through pride of consistency, or dread of being called apostates; that they stay not because they really love to stay, but only or chiefly because, as they suppose, they must.

This supposition is a wholly mistaken one and may prove to be a highly injurious one. At no time and under no circumstances whatever does Jesus wish, or will He accept any such merely formal, forced or constrained service—any service rendered from mere regard to outward consistency, or shame of backsliding. We remember that on one occasion when He had preached the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men, it is said that “many went back and walked no more with Him.” Did He try to stop them? Did He apologize for anything He had said, or soften it down to conciliate His dissatisfied and deserting hearers? Nothing of the sort. Instead of that He at once turned to the twelve and said to them, “Will ye also go away? If you cannot receive the truth, you too must leave me and follow those who have already gone.”

He says the same thing, in effect, now, to all who profess to follow Him. “Some,” He says, “who once professed friendship for me have deserted me. Some who declared that they would honor me before the world are now a scandal to me and to my cause. Some who engaged that they would attend faithfully on the word, sacraments and prayer, have nearly or quite forsaken them all. Some who covenanted to walk in a Christian way before their children and households, are now setting before them an unchristian example. Some who promised kindly to admonish, if need be, their fellow members, now

turn away from those who kindly admonish and would reclaim themselves. They have gone; will ye also go away?"

This brings me to say that although one who has by the Holy Spirit been brought to heartfelt confession and trust in God's mercy through Christ is ever after free to go back, he will yet never so retrace his steps as to settle down into his former impenitency. A seeming Christian may do that—a real Christian, never.

And why does he persevere? Is it because he would go back, but dare not? Because he dreads having people think that in a moment of ambitious haste he had undertaken more than he could carry out? Because, having given his word, he thinks that he must now make the best of a foolish bargain? Nay, verily: "For truly had they been mindful of that country from which they came out they might have had opportunity to return, but now"—and here follows the secret of his perseverance—"but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly."

Look at John B. Gough. He quit drinking, gave up the whiskey-bottle and the wine cup, cut loose from his drinking-companions and signed the pledge. Very soon he was satisfied that he had done a good thing. Had he been mindful of the low estate from which he had come out—the degradation, the misery, the despair, the inward hell of remorse, the ruin of all peace in time and hope for eternity—he might have had oppor-

tunity to return. We know how he was tempted to return, how he was goaded by the horrible appetite he had formed, how a snare was set for him by those whose unholy gains were being brought down by his successful advocacy of temperance. But God strengthened him and he persevered. A bargain indeed! Trade with men and you are apt to get the best of your bargain first—the best peaches at the top of the basket, the fairest apples face the unheaded barrel. Trade with the Lord Jesus Christ, your purchase grows fairer, finer, richer all the way through.

What did Gough find? A small return at first—a few dollars of hard-earned wages, the offered friendliness of a single humane stranger, a wish he faltered to express—a wish rather than a hope—that he might make his newly signed pledge good.

What did he find as he went on? He found the confidence of his friends, and especially his mother's confidence in him increasing. He found his power of resistance augmenting, his victory over appetite growing more and more assured. He found wasted talent restored to him, and not only that, but gradually he found what had appeared but a simple knack of mimicry unfolding into peerless gifts of dramatic eloquence. He found his little school-room audiences swelling by degrees to the crowded floors and galleries of the largest auditoriums. He found the compassionate kindness of a single stranger multiplying into

a million-hearted sympathy in both hemispheres. Himself the reclaimed one he found honored as the reclamer of hundreds of thousands. The self-distrusting, broken-hearted inebriate who had craved prayer and succor for himself from a few pitying hearts, found that same prayer spreading like the prophet's cloud, until at length from the whole broad heavens there were distilling upon him continuous showers of grateful blessing. Gough, go back! Back from the beautiful home his eloquence had won for himself to the maudlin moans of the gutter! Back from his newly gained companionship with the intelligent and refined to the brutish society of the dramshop! Back from the lecture platform to the low playhouse! Back from his now lofty place of earth-wide usefulness and honor to the pit and mire of short-lived animal indulgence! And was it mere pride of consistency, suppose ye, a dread of being called weak and unstable that kept John B. Gough a sober man? I trow not. He was no longer mindful of that condition from which he had come out because he had found another and a better; and because he was looking to find, what we are sure he has already found, a brighter and a better still in the unending hereafter.

Just as absurd and preposterous seems to any true follower of Jesus the idea of his going back to the world—the more so the older he gets to be. The longer he lives, the greater appears to him the contrast between his former condition of



spiritual darkness, bondage and fear, and his present standing in light, forgiveness, freedom, love and hope. He is more and more satisfied with the exchange he made when he gave up sin for Christ and the world for his soul. He may have made other decisions which he does regret; but that was a decision which he has no desire to change or even to reconsider. He leaves the past behind him gladly for the deeper joy here and for the abiding joy beyond—"a better country, even an heavenly."

Of the surpassing glory and blessedness of that better country we get a glimpse in the latter part of my text: "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city."

Any *man* may well be "ashamed" who promises more than he performs; who of set purpose excites desires and expectations only to disappoint those who trust him—the greater the promise, and the fuller the trust, the more thoroughly ashamed of himself ought the hope-exciter and the promise-breaker to be. A true man will weigh well what it involves, before he allow himself to be called minister, lawyer, physician, teacher, artist, mechanic, employer or employe. Can he be depended on to do all that the name which he has taken implies? If not, he is bound to suffer mortification for having dishonored his fair professions.



Very seriously indeed will a man think it over before he allow himself to be called a *husband*. One who has taken that name says to his bride: "I am going to leave you for a little while, not because I want to, but because I want to do the very best things for you and because I can do better for you by going than I could do by staying. I am going to prepare a much better home for you than I can make for you here." He goes and it may be he stays away for what she thinks is a very long time. But at length word comes from over the sea, saying that the new home is ready and bidding her to leave everything where she is and come. Trusting fully in both his sincerity and in his ability to do as he has promised, she does leave all; much that has been very dear to her—behind, and sets out on the long and wearisome journey. Would he not be "ashamed" on her coming, were she to find that his descriptions of the place had been overdrawn and deceptive? Were she to find the new home inelegant and inconvenient, the scenery tame, the society rude and wholly uncongenial? Would he not be heartily ashamed that he had lured the trusting one by at best half-fulfilled promises and that he must now witness the cruel disappointment of those very hopes which he had himself excited and encouraged? What sort of a husband would he be? Would he not be ashamed to be called one? Yes, but he would *not* be ashamed to be called husband, friend and guide in case the

reality justified, and more than justified, her very fondest expectations. How he will glory in the name rather—how rejoice rather with a pure and a proud joy, as he sees the rising gladness with which she catches a sight of the beautiful mansion, and her ever-growing delight as she is shown the numberless appointments by which every requirement of taste and comfort is met, as on looking about she gazes on scenery of hitherto unimagined loveliness, and especially as, on becoming acquainted with those who are to be her neighbors and companions she finds them, without exception, to be persons of congenial kindness, courtesy, intelligence and refinement.

What is there of His own creation, even here in this world, of which our God need be “ashamed?” Is it of these glorious mountains, these flowing seas, these lovely valleys, the bloom and verdure of spring, these summer and autumn harvests, these sunrisings and sunsettings? Imagination confesses itself weak fitly to portray the beauty, grandeur and sublimity of even these lowest of the works of God.

“*These* are thy glorious works, Parent of good,  
Almighty! thine this universal frame,  
Thus wondrous fair. Thyself how wondrous then!  
Unspeakable! who sitt’st above these heavens,  
To us invisible, or dimly seen  
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare  
Thy glory beyond thought, and power divine.”

So, too, although there are characters formed here in His image by the grace of Christ, of which even God Himself need not be and will not be ashamed, yet we know that He has in preparation for us, (and of which we shall ourselves be a part) a perfection of beauty, of character, of social order, and a perfection of bliss, of which the best that we see here is but a dim foreshadowing. Let not the most sanguine be afraid of fanciful expectations. Let imagination take the freest, boldest flights to which her eager wings may carry her; since "vast as our expectations may be, the realities of God will infinitely surpass them."

Will Jesus ever be ashamed, think you, that He has allowed Himself to be called by so many endearing names—friend, lover, husband, Savior, Lord, of His people? Will he ever be ashamed for the promise made to the loved ones He was about to leave, "I go to prepare a place for you?" It is indeed a wonderful condescension, a vast responsibility, in God, that He allows Himself to be called "our God:" yet will He never be "ashamed" that He offers Himself to be even "a God" to us His people, when once this short earthly journey being ended, we shall, one by one, enter the gate of that beautiful city which is awaiting us and whither so many of our loved ones have already gone?



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